

Understanding Cultural Assimilation from Migrants' Experiences



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APPROVAL**UNIVERSIDAD DEL CAUCA**

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UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL ASSIMILATION FROM MIGRANTS' EXPERIENCES

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Abstract: The present research deals with the process of Cultural Assimilation understood as the stages a migrant must go through to adapt to a new cultural context. A qualitative multiple case study was followed as a method to get closer to the human perspectives of the phenomena studied and the participants' life stories. Five individuals from different parts of the world shared their experiences as migrants through semi-structured interviews. The in-depth analysis of data collected allowed researchers to conclude that even though possessing certain similarities, Cultural Assimilation is a unique process that questions human roots and identities, as well as it involves complex stages such as bilingualism or biculturalism.

Keywords: *Cultural Assimilation, Cultural Context, Cultural Identity, Bilingualism, Biculturalism, Migrant, Culture.*

Resumen: Esta investigación se centra en el proceso de Asimilación Cultural, comprendido como las etapas por las que un migrante debe atravesar para adaptarse a un nuevo contexto cultural. El Estudio de Caso múltiple desde el paradigma cualitativo fue usado como método de aproximación a las perspectivas humanas del fenómeno estudiado y las historias de vida de los participantes. Cinco participantes provenientes de diferentes partes del mundo compartieron sus experiencias como migrantes a través de entrevistas semi-estructuradas. El análisis profundo de la información recolectada permitió a los investigadores concluir que, a pesar de poseer ciertas similitudes, la asimilación cultural es un proceso único que cuestiona las raíces humanas y sus identidades, y que a su vez involucra etapas complejas como el bilingüismo y biculturalismo.

Palabras Clave: *Asimilación Cultural, Contexto Cultural, Identidad Cultural, Bilingüismo, Biculturalismo, Migrante, Cultura.*

Content

Introduction	7
Problem Statement	8
Justification	11
Objectives	13
Previous Studies	14
Conceptual Framework	18
Culture.....	18
Migration and Culture.....	18
Cultural assimilation	19
Cultural Contact	20
L2 as a Host Language.....	21
Cultural Shock	22
Cultural Integration.....	23
Cultural Identity	23
Multiculturalism, Interculturalism and Pluriculturalism.....	25
Contextual Framework	26
‘Universidad del Cauca’	26
Migrants destinations	26
Methodology	30
Qualitative Research	30
Multiple Case Study.....	31
Participants.....	32
Research tools	33
Life Stories.....	35
Data Analysis	36
The Hidden Tales From Traveling Souls: Data Analysis	38
“‘We might be the master of our own thoughts, still we are the slaves of our own emotions” (Gilbert, E.).....	40
“‘Strong reasons make strong actions” (Shakespeare, W).....	44
Before the departure.....	48
The final choice.....	53
The beginning of the metamorphosis.....	58
Does this really feel like home?.....	58
First impressions never have a second chance and last forever.....	64
Hardships are part of life.....	70
There is no place like home...Unless... ..	74
You will always find your way back home, or your home will find its way back to you	78
The Meaning Beyond the Words	84
Relationships do not always feel the gap.....	84
Into the wilderness of a storm.....	90

	6
In many ways, everything changes	94
To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture (Fanon, F.)	97
Conclusions. Final Reflections on Cultural Assimilation.....	101
Migration and Culture: Its Relation with Cultural Assimilation	102
Cultural Contact: Cultural Integration & Cultural Shock - Cultural Assimilation Stages.....	103
L2 as a Host Language & Bilingualism.....	105
Cultural Identity: Interculturalism & Bicultural - Cultural Assimilation Outcomes	106
Recommendations	109
References	111
Appendixes.....	114

Introduction

This research focuses on the experiences that five people lived through when they became migrants, moving from one country to another. Through the analysis of their life stories, it seeks to understand the phenomenon known as Cultural Assimilation: the process a person goes through when they migrate and the stages they face trying to adapt and understand the new cultural context.

First, the problem statement and the objectives that guided the inquiry are presented, as well as the reasons that support the importance of it. Later, methodological aspects from the Qualitative Paradigm and the Multiple Study Case are shown to explain the research stages, instruments, participants, and procedures for the analysis of the experiences collected through the semi-structured interviews.

The data analysis chapter is entitled ‘The hidden Tales from Travelling Souls’ and is divided into three sections according to the units of meaning identified for each specific objective. All these sections deal with aspects that rise questions based on subjects such as the reasons behind the decision to migrate, aspects regarding cultural identity, adaptation processes, uses of language, and experiences regarding the Cultural Assimilation in order get closer to the migrants’ perspectives.

In this way, this work analyzes the different stages of Cultural Assimilation from five individuals’ experiences and life stories. It is revealed that the process varies depending on the individual who might acquire a particular level of bilingualism and biculturalism to the point where their cultural identity might be transformed into a new one.

Problem Statement

*En todos los tiempos, la humanidad ha conocido migraciones y desplazamientos masivos de población por diferentes motivos, como por ejemplo, afán de aventura, colonización de nuevos espacios, crecimiento demográfico excesivo, huida de conflictos y calamidades, o búsqueda de una mejora de vida social y económica*¹(Sagaama, 2009, p. 15).

Since the origin of humanity, displacement and migration has always accompanied people. According to Giménez Romero (2003) migration “...is the process of a person moving from their residence to another in order to fulfill temporary needs or achieve better living conditions”² (p. 20). Therefore, migration has been one of the most carried out human activities since ancient times, and continues being practiced nowadays.

In fact, rates of migration increase every year. For instance, in 2010 the United Nations (UN) reported an amount of more than 221 million people who decided to change their place of residence, a number that in 2018 reached more than 258 million migrants according to the International Organization for Migration - IOM. United Nations Migration - UN (2018); this information corroborates that migration is still a growing phenomenon with a projection towards the future.

¹ In all times humanity has known or has been aware of massive population migrations and journeys due to different reasons, such as, the thrill of adventure, colonization, excessive demographic growth, flight from conflicts and calamities, or in search of a better quality life.

² Translated from: “es el desplazamiento de una persona desde su lugar habitual de residencia a otro, para permanecer en él más o menos tiempo con el objetivo de satisfacer algunas necesidades o conseguir una determinada mejora.”

Accordingly, migration is an intricate problem that could be analyzed from different perspectives. Considering the idea given by Goldin, I., Cameron, G., & Balarajan, M. (2012) “Human migration tells the story of our essential oneness as a species and the great diversity of human communities” (p.37), a number of factors emerge from the complexity of migration, which a migrant must face. One of the factors to focus on would be the culture and the problem/challenge that it could represent. Based on the concept that someone may have about culture, a migrant may go through some problems and stages that will not always be pleasant; therefore, it will represent some difficulties/challenges to the individual regarding identity.

Cultural identity is part of culture itself, As Molano (2007) states “encloses a feeling of belonging to a certain social group in which shares cultural features such as costumes, values and believes”³ (p.73). Being the sense of belonging to a culture, one of the causes of the confrontation of ideas, beliefs, values and others when a migrant dwells in a new country, it might result in a struggle for their identities and their attempt to assimilate the new features, customs, traditions and language of a new culture, caused by an abrupt change.

The phenomenon of struggling, confrontation or adaptation of the migrant individual is the focus of this research proposal, and will be referred as "Cultural Assimilation Process" being considered as the internal process that a migrant must face and overcome in their experience, and could be frustrating or pleasant when facing a new cultural context. The concept of *Assimilation* will be addressed according to Bochner, &

³ Translated from: “encierra un sentido de pertenencia a un grupo social con el cual se comparten rasgos culturales, como costumbres, valores y creencias”

Furnham (2001) who understand it as “the process whereby a group or a whole society gradually adopt, or are forced into adopting, the customs, values, lifestyles and language of a more dominant culture”. The concept of *Culture* will be considered as " that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society." (UNESCO, 2017).

Based on the above stated, and being the main interest of this research proposal to get close to and understand the experience of cultural assimilation process lived by a migrant, the research question is stated as: *In what ways cultural assimilation affects a migrant?* As it may have been specified, each migrant goes through a different cultural assimilation process, finding that there is no such thing as a same or repeated cultural assimilation experience, this research’s main focus is to try and study as much as possible those existing processes that the participants have lived.

In this way, the phenomenon to study is subscribed under the interpretive paradigm of qualitative research, it is sought to demonstrate that there is not a single truth within the process of cultural assimilation, on the contrary, all of these experiences are different, diverse, and that they depend completely on the situations in which these people are and/or have been. The multiple study case is proposed in order to understand the particular experience of migration based on the life stories shared by the selected participants during non-structured interview sessions. The cultural assimilation process will be then understood under the lenses of five singular lived experiences that will reveal the complexity a general human phenomenon.

Justification

Based on the different sources related to the human activity of migration and its relation with culture, the process of assimilation and culture identification; urgent questions about the cultural consequences that people should face once they interact with a different cultural context from their own start to arise.

The understanding of the process known as cultural assimilation may provide different insights in order to get a bigger picture to the phenomenon of migration, allowing to retrieve more information for future research regarding this topic and leaving a precedent for people that have left their native country must face, the conflicts to which they must be overlaid, and as it overcomes the cultural shock faced once they are exposed to the new culture.

Specifically, the program of Modern Languages, English and French from Universidad del Cauca, establishes the intercultural competence as one of its pillars, understanding that it is impossible to think about language acquisition process without analyzing cultural implications (PEP, p. 12). In this sense, the program promotes curricular objectives and research inquiries that allow the understanding of their students' own culture and target cultures implied in the acquisition of English and French. Then, this research proposal is pertinent since it seeks to understand an intercultural phenomenon with linguistic implications that touches the complexity of human beings and considering languages beyond established grammar patterns but as a whole net of significance.

Also, as future teachers, language students face multiple challenges and some of those will be teaching students that come from different cultural contexts. It is a duty to aid students not only on their subject, but to care for the human part of them too. As modern language students are probably going to travel and visit different countries, with considerable changes in the culture, this reflection may guide other students in this process giving sensitive, real and comprehensive insights from life stories of migrants.

Finally, it is important to develop research proposals in the Modern Languages program related to intercultural understanding, given the fact that diverse cultures encounters are common and significant in the region of the North of Cauca. Inquiries guided under the qualitative paradigm will allow a humanistic and reflective understanding of the complexities of foreign languages and foreign cultures.

Objectives

General objective

- ✓ To reflect on the process of cultural assimilation experienced by a migrant.

Specific objectives

- ✓ To come upon the reasons behind the decision to migrate and its connection with cultural assimilation.
- ✓ To identify the contributing factors of the new context in a migrant's cultural identity.
- ✓ To establish how cultural assimilation affects a migrant's coexistence with the new context.
- ✓ To provide different insights in order to get a bigger picture to the phenomenon of migration.

Previous Studies

“Psychology of culture shock” 2nd Ed. (2001) written by Colleen Ward, Stephen Bochner and Adrian Furnham. USA & Canada

This article talks about the importance of studying people going through the process of culture shock and its symptoms. It says that there is an escalating migrant issue as people from all around the world has reasons to start a new life in a new country. It is important to pay attention and help these individuals to ease into their new context as it has been demonstrated that social support alongside personality reduces the migrants' stress.

The article also deals with different scenarios as people may assimilate, reject, or change; depending on a variety of unique factors. Its approach mentions and analyses what a migrant individual may be facing, and contains information that is useful for humanistic studies.

“La asimilación cultural como destino: el análisis de las relaciones étnicas” (2001), written by Eduardo Terrén, Chicago, USA.

The article tackles the subject of culture building alongside racial awareness, saying that these subjects are rather interesting. It tries to give insight, or rather prove right or wrong some possible ethnical patterns related to possible conflict. The author set out questions and tried to answer them, such as if ethnical relations have patterns, if they evolve, of if they are somehow predictable in promotion or pacification conflict

scenarios. He likes to address this as a “sociological problem” since his efforts lead to try and comprehend Chicago’s social reality. What is useful in this research is the ethnical subject, it is known that ethnics play an important role in cultural assimilation (here touching the subject of stereotypes).

Mistrust, fragmented solidarity, and transnational migration: Colombians in New York City and Los Angeles (1999) by Luis Eduardo Guarnizo, Arturo Ignacio Sanchez & Elizabeth M. Roach, USA.

This article centers its interest in the different aspects of Colombian migrants living in two different places in the USA. It focuses on giving a glance at Colombia’s social reality and their lives in the USA. The article offers a reflection upon the economic, political and socio-cultural transnational connections that Colombians had established in New York and Los Angeles, two places with the largest Colombian populations in the United States.

Most interestingly, the research concludes that people are destined to unify at some point and to a certain degree (regarding social-culture, ethnicity and others), which means, that it is not necessary for any unique features of groups to disappear, everything will evolve as differences will be even harder to see, getting mixed and, eventually, surpassed.

Ideology, Identity, and Intercultural Communication: An Analysis of Differing Academic Conceptions of Cultural Identity by Young Yun Kim, 2007 USA.

In this article Yun expresses how the concept of cultural identity has been changing throughout the years until today; emphasizing on the concept of pluralism, considered as a type of harmony of minor socio-cultural groups living in a wider dominant culture, such as the USA.

The article exposes different issues that have emerged regarding the topic of how cultural identity should be studied and/or investigated. Kim chose some of the more distinguished concepts used to define cultural identity in order to compare them, being able to explain a plethora of perspectives surrounding cultural identity, its meaning and how it should be researched using differing academic concepts.

Another relevant aspect tackled in the article is the fact that nowadays people from all over the world can get together thanks to technology and social media, so differences regarding culture face two scenarios. People can get together as they cherish and value what makes them different; or just the opposite, conflict raising as people take sides for whatever reason. This is the situation that the USA faces and represents an ongoing challenge, having the responsibility to protect individual's integrity and safety. This study aids this research as it deals with many subjects and concepts that will be used to conduct the study.

Adaptación de los inmigrantes extranjeros en España: superando el choque cultural | The adaptation of foreign immigrants in Spain: overcoming cultural shock by Anna Zlobina, Nekane Basabe & Darío Páez, Spain 2004.

A study was conducted in order to identify the different symptoms and the effects that immigrants in Spain have had in their adaptation process, as well as how immigrants have noticed the difference regarding the new culture, they live in. All participants come from around the world, therefore there is a wide range of perspectives backing up this study. The results show that cultural shock varies by a lot of factors, one of them being by group of origin. Three things that seem to affect immigrants are the economy, more equality regarding gender and closeness regarding the local culture.

One of the things that shows this research is that the way migrants will be treated by the inhabitants, depends on their native country. This study may be not only useful in this study, but other researches as well since by showing the reality these immigrants face, people may be more thoughtful, thinking twice before doing something, creating a more tolerant and respectful society.

Conceptual Framework

Culture

Culture is something that each person has incorporated in their conception as a human. The culture is an expression of learned and shared behaviors and beliefs of a group or particular social group in society. According to Spencer-Oatey (2008) "Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioral conventions that are shared by a group of people". In this manner when a culture is exposed to contact with a different one, this may represent some cultural conflicts like the expression of beliefs, moral acts, behavior in society, etc. In this way, it is understood that culture is affected by the interaction with a new social group or society.

Migration and Culture

Migration creates some tension in the way that a person interacts with a new cultural context. According to the text "Crossing Borders: Regional and Urban Perspectives on International Migration" (2018), migration is interpreted as the building of tension in the society. The waves of migrations are considered as a natural process that contributes in the shaping of societies across the world. In this way, migration can be defined as cultural impacts, most of the time in upsetting ways.

Trying to take a broader perspective, the concept of migration is raised in relation to the origin of some negative effects on the cultural identification that a person gets,

based on migration activity, and the conception of culture that are concepts to evaluate. According to Ward, Bochner, & Furnham (2001) the relation between migrants and culture produce a new environment. "it is widely recognized that immigrant acculturation is a product of interaction between settlers and members of the receiving culture." (P. 194), thus, culture and migration should be studied parallel in an attempt to identify cultural assimilation as a process that is realized by a migrant at the time to overcome the negative effects of a changing cultural environment.

The approach of migration as a stimulator of cultural problems that a person lives by habiting a host country; it could be a subject to be studied. These cultural problems could be like "cultural shock, cultural identification, learning a second language as a host" exposing a way to understand what kind of process is lived by a migrant

Cultural assimilation

Talking about Cultural Assimilation, it would be considered as a process and not just as a stage which a migrant should live or face. This subject is proposed by Ward, Bochner, & Furnham (2001) saying that assimilation is a gradually adoption of some values or costumes of a new culture by living in the host country. Something that gives a contribution to the comprehension of the human process adapting to a new culture; explaining the how of the interaction with different cultures and groups themselves happens. Approaching the concept of assimilation, it is the gradually adopting or adopting by force a new culture.

According to Ward, Bochner & Furnham (2001), when some cultural groups come into contact with each other, they tend to have an impact on each other's social structures, institutional arrangements, political processes, and value systems. The nature and extent of these changes will depend on the conditions under which the contact occurs (e.g. whether peaceful or in conquest), the relative power of the interacting groups, and a wide range of other variables.

In this way, it would be the "assimilation, integration and segregation," a series of processes and stages a person faces in one way or another, some of these being cultural, social and emotional problems that come from living in a different country from their own, where assimilation would be the main concept.

Assimilation is showed as one of the many processes that a person uses to overcome some problems like cultural shock, or cultural identity and with the development of this research, it seeks to understand how significant this process is for a migrant, when they go through a series of factors that they must face. Thus, assimilation would be seen from different points of views, not only being part of a stage or another stage from another process, but considering it as an independent process, with its own stages, effects and results, consequently complex.

Cultural Contact

Cultural contact is proposed by Ward, Bochner, & Furnham (2001) saying "Culture contact is likely to be stressful, and an analysis is provided of factors such as personality and social support that can reduce the stress." So, the cultural contact would

be a factor to be interpreted depending on, how is dealt with or carried out by the migrant.

In the process of carrying out a pleasant cultural contact, the stage to be considered, is the “integration into the new cultural environment” where someone is exposed or coexists with others, thus, this stage leads to figure out some cultural problems. Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, (2001) explain as a cultural exchange in relation to the environment, when different cultures differ in their conceptions of identities, something that makes the integration between cultures part of the process of cultural assimilation.

L2 as a Host Language

The research “Enfoques para el Estudio de la Adquisición de una L2 como Lengua de Acogida. su Evolución hacia un Modelo Descriptivo de Corte Pragmático” exposes an L2 due to migration contexts which is acquired by living in a foreign country, different of our own. It explains how an individual must face a series of different unfavorable factors, and how the same context helps them on their assimilation process. It exposes that the language is used for real needs, and daily living; an activity key for survival, were individuals seem completely surrounded by host language speakers, giving free stimulation to face that challenge, learning a new language and its culture, so this could resolve some of the difficulties a person may face.

Cultural Shock

Cultural shock, according to Zlobina et al. (2004), introduces another phenomenon associated to cultural fatigue produced by a continuous adaptation effort, a cognitive overload due to the need to permanently operate consciously and voluntarily, adjusting to a new society. All this can lead to health, psychological and somatic problems alongside social relation problems too.

This way, it gives a new idea and notion about cultural shock. It says that “cultural shock leads to realize the existing differences, feeling their impact and to face the arising difficulties”⁴ (p. 46), as it’s pointing out the psychological health of the individuals; this work provides information about the possible symptoms that may be mentioned further in the investigation, which also highlights the triggers responsible for a migrant’s unstable mental health.

On the other hand, in the research “Culture Shock Due to Contact with the Unfamiliar Cultures”, Bochner (2003) defines cultural shock as the contact with an unfamiliar culture, people or places. The term "culture shock" is used to describe how people react to uncomfortable situations. Even the unknown can be terrifying, we nevertheless argue that "culture shock" is not inevitable, or for that matter, as widespread as it is often suggested. Indeed, in many circumstances culture contact can be a satisfying experience.

Having a view of culture shock, it is important to know that any person that will travel to a new place will experience it. As foreign language students project themselves

⁴ Translated from: “... el choque cultural conlleva el darse cuenta de las diferencias existentes, sentirse impactado por ello y hacer frente a las dificultades que surgen.”

working or living in another country (be it temporary or permanently) and having the knowledge of what culture shock is and what comes along with it may aid or at least will provide relief to others. In “Culture Shock Due to Contact with the Unfamiliar Cultures” it discusses the affectionate, behavioral and cognitive components that come from the interaction of people from different cultural backgrounds, searching ways to come to an understanding among them.

Cultural Integration

The text written by Herrera (1994) shows the integration as an exchange between cultural environment and the migrant. In this way, it defines integration as a process of great complexity that they understand in terms of collective action, encompassing as natives and newcomers, who negotiate their co-presence in the public space.

Once these negotiations have been carried out among the individuals, integration would be done therefore creating a place where migrants and the new cultural environment deal between them. Accepting some attitudes and ideas of the new cultural identity and creating a process of adaptation to the new environment.

Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is the expression of some values of a group or society. This society exchanges some political values, beliefs and costumes between the people that feel a kind of identification with it. In this way, cultural identity is the way which a

person shows what they believe and think, those cultural things that a person through time has learned because of school, friends, parents, and their surroundings.

Cultural identity is considered by Molano (2007) as the act to understand or learn all a person's sense by belonging to a group, including their cultural features, costumes, beliefs and values, things that are part of a culture or an individual. According to this, Cultural identity is what a person is made of, when someone identifies the difference between one culture to another, then their afterwards reaffirmation or acceptance.

It also relates the cultural identity with their territory or its development. Making a comparison between culture and territory, saying that these two factors change if one or both are affected. Confirming that the cultural identification process depends of where the individual is at the moment.

At the moment of arriving to another cultural context, it is normal that the person will try to find similarities and differences among their new environment. It tells that changes are seen from a geographic and cultural viewpoint, using one of the concepts of this work.

Any human has a cultural identity; it identifies themselves with a specific community or a group of people. It is made from the people surrounding them, loved ones specially, people who influence and inspire them, which have taught them their culture that is their heritage. Cultural identity is in a way part of a legacy passed on from one generation to another; other countless factors are also to take in account when it comes to cultural identity. This work will be highly influenced by the cultural identity of our participants as it influences what people think and believe depending on the situation.

Multiculturalism, Interculturalism and Pluriculturalism

Bernabé Villodre (2012) proposes certain concepts of interest for the elaboration of this research such as interculturality, pluriculturality and multiculturalism with the intention of ensuring better social situation treatments.

Interculturality can be considered as the ideal communal living state of all pluricultural society. It is characterized by interpersonal relations based on knowledge and recognition. Interculturality is not a close and exclusive concept. This concept stands up for diversity, respect, knowledge and cultures' interaction.

Pluriculturalism designates different ideological and social groups tendencies in a unite state, understood as the simultaneous existence of two or more cultures in a territory and their possible interaction. Pluriculturalism is defined as the phenomenon that may occur in any society, consequence of migration which brings the pluriculturalism of cultures.

Multiculturalism can be defined as the presence of different cultures on a territory that limit themselves to coexist, but not live together. In this case there is no need to have exchanging situations; it is a static concept that leads to segregation and denial communal living situations, and a social transformation due to paternalist posture adoptions towards present cultural minorities.

This explains the different cases where a migrant can be exposed at the moment when living in a new country. The action of migration can represent or create an impact in the host society.

Contextual Framework

‘Universidad del Cauca’

The “Universidad del Cauca, Regionalización” headquarters is part of the decentralization process in which the university has compromised and enrolled in a pluralist society and participatory frame as it states in the national constitution.

In Cauca’s department there is a disparity in the aspects of social life, economic and cultural between regions and there is no big interaction, exchange nor connectivity between them. The presence of ‘Universidad del Cauca in this territory tries to fill the historical gaps and promote educational an research development.

The Bachelor Program in Modern Languages, English-French belongs to the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of the University of Cauca. This academic program aims at the training of teachers and researchers in Foreign Languages (English-French), to assume educational activities in preschool, basic and vocational media. In addition, it favors research as a pedagogical and knowledge process, materializing it in the orientation of the educational practice carried out by students, in different academic institutions, during the VIII and IX semester of the degree and as graduates (Universidad del Cauca, 2020).

Migrants destinations

To understand the phenomenon of migration and cultural assimilation, five participants were selected. The first participant is a Colombian-Chinese person who lives

in Guangzhou, China since 2018. He studies Modern languages at university, and lives with his family. He is on his twenties. According to He, M., et al (2006)

“Guangzhou is the capital city of Guangdong Province, and the center of its political, economic, scientific, educational and cultural life in south China. The city is located in the south of Guangdong Province, north of the Pearl River Delta. It lies close to the South China Sea, Hong Kong, and Macau. The city covers an area of 7434.4 square kilometers (2870 square miles) and is home to nearly 10 million people with permanent residency and a 3.7 million transitory population. The experience of cultural assimilation of a Chinese person in this context, will give important insights to our research proposal ...” (p. 753)

The second person interviewed is a French man, he is in his sixties. He works as a teacher. He lives in Popayán, Colombia since 2000.

“Popayan is recognized on a global level (...) for its wide cultural heritage. This has its biggest expression in the Holy Week processions, recognized in 2009 as an Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) by UNESCO. In addition to this, the potential for social and economic development that exists in this Latin American country should also be considered as a result of the Colombia Peace Process Accords, completed in 2016.”

The third participant interviewed is a Colombian woman who lives in United States, New York, Queens. She only finished high school; she is on her sixties and works as a house CL/CO.

New York is a big city located in USA, in which has already passed the 8.5 million residents.

“...New York City’s 8.5 million residents barely keep it in the top 20 world cities in terms of population. New York remains a center for culture and economic life for the United States and the world. The local politics of the city cast a long shadow on trends in the rest of the United States.”

The fourth participant is a man from Guinea, who lives in Albi, France. He is eighteen; he works in a company, and studies at the same time.

Albi is a city of culture by its heritage, its walls are living witnesses to this with a strong aesthetic identity around brick, it is the custodian of ancestral knowledge, without being locked in the past and today knows how to create and project itself through multiple practices. Albi is called the "Episcopal City of Albi", listed as World Heritage of Humanity on July 31, 2010, also Albi has a unique collection of over 1,000 artistic works. Taken from “Albi official Website in French”.

The fifth individual is a Colombian-Japanese woman in her thirties who lives in Yukarigaoka, Sakura Shi, Japan. She only finished high school and works in a shipment company.

We consider Japan as a society where people pride themselves in their culture, gastronomy and history. According to Davies and Ikenor, (2011),

“The geography of Japan island is said to have had a great influence on the development of many of the country’s customs and culture values, (...) as a result, people had to live close together in communities in which everyone was well acquainted with one other one. The concept of harmony, or *wa* became an important factor in Japanese life helping to maintain relationships between members of close-knit communities.”

Methodology

Qualitative Research

Talking about interpretation, explanations and the nature of the problem or phenomena a person sometimes faces or is affected, the qualitative research is the method where the description of events can be understood in terms of a person's experience.

According Adri Labuschagne (2003):

Qualitative research (...) is mainly concerned with the properties, the state and the character (i.e., the nature, of phenomena). The word qualitative implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are rigorously examined, but not measured in terms of quantity, amount or frequency. Qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed data about a much smaller number of people and cases. Qualitative data provide depth and detail through direct quotation and careful description of situations, events, interactions and observed behaviors". (p. 100).

The qualitative research contributes to the process of understanding people, descriptions, and information collected. In this way, the analysis involves the non-numerical organization of data as Labuschagne (2003) explained "the non-numerical organization of data in order to discover patterns, themes, forms and qualities found in field notes, interviews, transcripts, open-ended questionnaires, diaries, case studies, etc." revealing the themes about the meaning of the phenomena and the lived experiences.

In this way, this research was centered on the qualitative paradigm to understand in different ways the facts, variations and experiences told by the participants with the intention to access the phenomenon here understood as Cultural Assimilation.

Multiple Case Study

With the intention of interpreting and understanding the personal experiences faced by our participants, we chose the multiple case study method, which allowed us to go in-depth of the collected information through interviews from the participants, as within their experiences was found the data needed to retrieve their cultural assimilation process as migrants.

This method is useful as allows to approach to non-evident phenomena, as it is the cultural assimilation process (since it is based on a person's experience, which differs from one to another). Carrie Williams (2007) says that:

The data collection for a case study is extensive and draws from multiple sources such as direct or participant observations, interviews, archival records or documents, physical artifacts, and audiovisual materials. The researcher must spend time on-site interacting with the people studied. The report would include lessons learned or patterns found that connect with theories. (p. 68).

This research proposal used semi-structured interviews. In interacting with the participants and comparing the results of each interview the researchers will be able to

find similarities and differences, identifying the possible patterns that make significant part in the cultural assimilation process of a migrant.

In this work researchers implemented the multiple case study, with different cases (multiple participants) who have lived and continue to live different realities. Trying to include variety, each case lives in a different socio-cultural context (different countries) that we desire to explain, describe and interpret.

The case study develops the following structure in five steps according (Montero & León, 2002)

1. Selection and identification of the case
2. Development of the questions (interview)
3. Data source localization
4. Analysis and interpretation
5. Final report

Participants

This research proposal counted on five participants who have lived the target experience of reflection: the cultural assimilation as migrants. They were selected because of the places they are located. All five were born in geographical and cultural parts of the world different from the places they were born, so the gathered experiences were as unique as possible. Ages varied from young adults to elderly participants.

The information collected during the interviews was recorded to facilitate transcription and data was used for academic purposes and protected according to the consent format (See Appendix 1) signed by each participant.

Research tools

Researchers considered necessary the use of interviews in this work as this research was based on the personal experiences of the participants, it is impossible to not make an in-depth research of cultural assimilation without knowing first hand their process.

Diving into the concept of an interview according to (Wilson, 2012) in the qualitative research method as it allows to not only analyze the data retrieved voluntarily given by the participant, but also allows things such as to read their body language and expressions, thus turning into possible data. This research used calls and video call; the participants were most likely not be uncomfortable and they were more open to share their experiences.

Semi-structured interviews were used for being more flexible. They allow questions that guide the interviewer and restrain the possibility of getting lost in the interview. This type of interview permit researchers to pursue any topic of interest that may rise during the interview as it is not required to follow the rules blindly.

The interview questions were designed and organized according to the specific objectives and are presented as follows. It must be emphasized that these questions were a guide and not an un-modifiable list. The idea was to allow the participants to tell their

stories about the migration experience in an open interaction with the researchers. Beta interviews were conducted (See Appendix 2) with two participants to test the reliability and accuracy of each question. The questions were proven effective, and researchers proceeded to modify, add and change little details to the guide questions, as well as to reflect on important perspectives to take into account related to the role of interviewers.

The set of selected questions is presented here:

Specific Objectives	Questions
To come upon the reasons behind the decision to migrate and its connection with cultural assimilation.	When did you decide to leave your original country? [¿Cuándo decidiste dejar tu país de origen?]
	Why did you decide to leave your original country? [¿Por qué decidiste dejar tu país de origen?]
	What are those reasons that motivate you to choose the country that you are living now? [¿Cuáles fueron las razones que te motivaron a elegir el país en el cual vives en la actualidad?]
	Can you describe chronologically the events before your traveling? [¿Podrías describir cronológicamente los eventos anteriores a tu viaje? -Preparativos, documentación, etc.
	Can you describe your feelings before traveling? Any particular anecdote that you consider significant? [¿Puedes describir tus sentimientos antes del viaje? ¿Alguna anécdota particular que consideres significativa?]
To identify the contributing factors of the new context in a migrant's cultural identity.	What are those things that you consider most difficult to face from the new culture? [¿Cuáles son los aspectos que consideras más difíciles de enfrentar en la nueva cultura?]
	Do you consider that you faced some problems the first months? What kind of problems? [Consideras que te enfrentaste a algunos problemas los primeros meses? ¿Qué clase de problemas?]
	Have you changed some habits or way of thinking by staying in the host country? [¿Has cambiado tu forma de pensar o hábitos al quedarte en el país anfitrión?]

	<p>How often do you travel to your country of origin? What feelings do you have when returning? Do you notice any particular changes in your own considerations of your birthplace? [¿Con qué frecuencia viajas a tu país de origen? ¿Qué sentimientos experimentas al retornar? ¿Notas algún cambio particular en tu forma de percibir tu lugar de nacimiento?</p>
	<p>What kind of feelings did you have during the first months? [¿Qué tipo de sentimientos tuviste durante los primeros meses? (Cultural Shock)</p>
<p>To establish how cultural assimilation affects a migrant's coexistence with the new context.</p>	<p>Are there any cultural practices or ways of interaction from your host country that you consider completely different from your birth place? How have you faced them? [¿Existen prácticas culturales o modos de interacción dentro tu país anfitrión que consideres completamente diferentes a las de tu país de origen? ¿Cómo te enfrentaste a ellas?</p>
	<p>Have you ever lived situations that you consider discriminatory? Describe [¿Has vivido situaciones que consideres discriminatorias? Descríbelas.</p>
	<p>How have your perceptions/opinions about your host country have changed before and after your traveling? [¿Cómo han cambiado tus percepciones u opiniones sobre tu país anfitrión antes y después del viaje?]</p> <p>Speaking the host's language country changed something in your relation with others? (in different aspects such as personal or professional matters, social interaction in general, using the host language in public spaces and so on? [El hablar la lengua del país anfitrión ha cambiado de alguna manera su relación con los otros? [en diferentes aspectos de la vida diaria como las relaciones formales e informales, laborales, interacción social, hablando la lengua en espacios públicos, etc.]</p>

Life Stories

As mentioned before, this research retrieved all needed data from the participants' life experiences. In this sense, oral testimonies were considered, and the life story approach was included to enrich the study case design. An accurate definition given by Bertaux & Kohli (1984) says that "the life story refers implicitly to the totality of a person's experience, because there are many ways to elicit a life story and more than a

single way to talk about one's past, life stories (as oral, autobiographical narratives generated through interaction) potentially lend themselves to a multiplicity of uses". (P. 217)

Thus, giving more than one possibility with the participants' life stories, this perspective allows freedom in interpretations and future analyses. Life Stories considered as part of the methodological design to access in a more sensitive way to the multiple study case, will allow to present a final document including narratives of the migration experience combining the academic and the reflective perception of the cultural assimilation process.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the biggest challenge in qualitative research. According to Lévano (2007) it has to respond the following questions: What to do with heterogeneous data? How should be managed the information to understand the torrent of concepts and propositions suggested by qualitative analysis?

In this way, the information must be collected during the interview sessions has to be transcribed and organized following the next steps:

- Coding category development.
- Data coding.
- Classify data on its respective categories.

Categories werw identified according to those relevant life experiences told by the participants that make part of the cultural assimilation process. They helped us to identify

how the cultural assimilation process affects a migrant and to write some conclusions and recommendations about this topic.

The Hidden Tales From Traveling Souls: Data Analysis

After venturing into migration as a phenomenon that generates some obstacles regarding human behavior, we dared to conceive the idea of reflecting on it from the perspective of the cultural assimilation experienced by people who took a risk that later on made them become migrants, people who traveled around the world, each with their own reasons and hopes. Therefore, following a qualitative perspective based on a Multiple Case Study design, we tried to explore their experiences and understand all that they went through in this research account.

The conducted interviews showed our participants' own worlds as they are rich in diversity, culturally and globally speaking. We managed to gather people who nowadays live in foreign countries that do not resemble at all from the places that gave birth to them, not only that, but these new places alongside their cultures became a second home, a part of them as they so expressed in our sessions.

To protect our participants' identity, we have chosen names of famous people whose feats traveled not only from place to place but through time as well. These characters belong to individuals who in one way or another changed their lives when they started a journey. Some names belong to fictional characters, some to mythical stories and some to real events, the only thing they have in common is their longing for traveling and new experiences. Changing real names for fictional ones served to the purpose of confidentiality as well as guiding the narrative of experiences. A general overview of each participant is presented before the analysis.

Lodbrok⁵ is a man who nowadays lives in Popayan but was born in France. At first arriving for business, he fell in love with Colombia and decided to move his whole life there, working as a French teacher and enjoying what he calls his Colombian identity. Phileas⁶ is a young Chinese-Colombian man who decided to visit the country from which his family roots are originally from. He traveled to China to study, and to learn its language and culture.

Aronnax⁷ is a guy from Guinea that experienced hardships from a young age. Traveling to different places in search of one to call home, he ended up in France where he studies and works, being a true example of personal growth. Angelou⁸ is a young woman with Colombian and Japanese parents whose mixed roots lead her to take a leap of faith to see how her life could be in Japan, obtaining a what she considers a personal and professional success. Finally, Earhart⁹, a Colombian mother whose heart is split between Santander de Quilichao, her place of birth, and her current home in USA, New York. She travelled wanting to improve her and her family's life quality while also grieving the loss of her brother. She ended up staying, working in special care.

⁵ This name was inspired by the Viking Ragnar Lodbrok from the Nordic chronicles. He is well known not only for being a great traveler but a conqueror as well.

⁶ Phileas is the main character of the famous book *Around the World in Eighty Days* written by Jules Verne. His charm to make others laugh while loneliness led him to a memorable journey that makes him interesting enough for being used as a reference.

⁷ This name was inspired by Professor Pierre Aronnax from the book *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* written by Jules Verne. Somehow, this fictional character shared certain similar adventures and hardships with the participant.

⁸ This name was selected in honor of Maya Angelou, an influential woman in American history, mostly known for her award-winning memoir *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* which became the first non-fiction best-seller piece of literature created by an African American woman.

⁹ This was inspired by Amelia Earhart, the aviation pioneer that represents the dreams, perseverance, and hope of the hearts who never give up.

We have collected people's stories, untold parts of their lives that may represent thousands of others, fragments of their souls which they shared with us as such interviews became more of an open-heart three-way conversation. In the end, we believe we got closer, forming a connection as from beginning to end we did not only talk, but we also laughed, we saw some tears and joy on their accomplishments, a heart-to-heart approach. It is used to say that what is not written is bound to be forgotten, therefore it was crucial to experience our interviews, giving their stories not only the shape but also the potential to be told and interpreted once again under a reflective qualitative paradigm of understanding. The interviews were transcribed and were identified units of meaning which are presented in the following sections.

“We might be the master of our own thoughts, still we are the slaves of our own emotions” (Gilbert, E.)

We could consider migration as a natural phenomenon born within travelers who throughout history have possessed an errant spirit, which have eventually led them to discover new worlds. Our ancestors ventured throughout the known and unknown world, with this, they shared their essence with others that would also share their own in exchange, thus creating tight bonds with a legacy that would prevail as our heritage. Sagaama (2009) narrates there are several reasons as to why someone would decide to move from one place to another, some being more on the sentimental side than others, even from the origins of human history. Later, we would confirm this appreciation as we dived into our participants' experiences to find answers.

We can start with some words used by our participants when asked about the origin of their wish. It is described from the genuine desire “...*Me acuerdo niño yo quería vivir en el exterior pero de esos sueños que uno tiene de niño y no los cumple todos*”, to a mighty need “...*Entonces dije “no, no voy a hacer nada aquí, yo quiero ser ya independientemente definitivamente por mí misma y ya valerme solita*”. We have witnessed and felt that there is so much more to migration than just moving from one place to another. The action itself, even though important, is merely the beginning of a person's journey that represents at the end a transformation born from an identity reconstruction, a rebirth.

All these experiences that were shared in our interviews have left us an intriguing search as a result: the recognition of what we have named cultural assimilation. Based on our interpretation, such life stories will allow others to see further into what goes into the life of a person that starts this journey, rather than emphasize the decision itself.

Yo no creía, yo temblaba yo solita, no dormía, yo abrazaba más a mi hijo, yo dormía más con mi hijo porque es que yo dormía con mi hijo, yo no podía creer que yo iba a dejar a mi hijo (...) pero yo si tuve mucho soporte de mi hermana Thamar, de Caliche que es el papá de mi niño también y de Liliana mi hermanita ...

Here we found the first similarity among our participants, even though they do not know each other, they explained a feeling or experience that although is not the same, it closely resembles one another.

... también por estar llorando porque al final ya en la puerta para ya a punto de entrar me...Me desmorone y no me quería ir (risas) y ya el primer vuelo lo perdí, desde Colombia perdí el primer vuelo y eso fue toda una Odisea porque me tocó esperar un próximo vuelo que me llevaba a Perú y en Perú tenía que esperar como dos días más o menos, me tocó esperar en Perú y fue horrible porque imagínese, la primera vez que salía de casa, no conocía a nadie, era otro país igual, me estaba quedando en la casa de la mamá de un esposo de mi tía que vive aquí (Japón). Entonces me quedé allá y todo pero en las noches yo lloraba porque yo decía “no, yo para que me fui de mi casa, yo me voy a poner mal”

Here we feel the emotions this person goes through as they prepare for their journey ahead, in this case, their desperation from what feels like abandoning their family environment and what they have built throughout their life. Angelou experienced a dilemma as she was between two abysses, what would become the past and the one of her unrevealed future, her mind on a desert of emotions and sensations that were impossible to contain (González and Smith, 1998).

Por otro lado, antes de salir del país estaba muy ansioso, era la primera vez que salía solo del país, por lo tanto, lo que también estaba un poco asustado, pero ya cuando uno llega al destino es como que ya siente alivio...

At the same time, other feelings not so pleasant can be felt too while mentally preparing to go to another country, relatable and commonly known as we feel anxiety and afraid in certain daily life situations too (although not exactly the same), common, but not less important. Meanwhile, others felt rather different.

Yo la verdad me vine muy sereno (...) es hasta de pronto un poquito extraño, porque como les decía, era un poquito lanzarse al vacío, precisamente, esa no posibilidad de saber exactamente pues tal vez en esa época era normal no saber bueno en fin. Yo no recuerdo sentimiento un particular...

Here, we realize that perhaps, sometimes, there might not be abandonment issues from leaving what you have known your whole life, on the contrary, it seems that this process is a natural occurrence, meant to happen. Another case is when destiny seems to play a card on you, destiny as it becomes inevitable, handing out your sentence.

Quand il est décédé il avait un peu d'argent, lui qu'on appelle oncle qui s'est remarié avec ma mère, et du coup mon oncle Louis - si tu veux c'est l'imam il fait la prière à la mosquée- et tout et du coup il a dit que c'est nécessaire que moi et mes petits frères des sorties à l'école, il nous envoie dans un lieu où on va étudier que le Coran, ça c'était au Sénégal...

On the other hand, life presents itself with radical changes and due to not having the opportunity to be able to make the choice of traveling, because this was an imposition, their free-will was taken from their hands and they simply had to accept their fate, with no consideration of their feelings whatsoever.

Representing certain feelings or emotions that our participants shared with us, we could observe what's left hidden or unseen, it is not explicit on the “visible” reasons. Which allows us to venture to the possible identification from the unsaid part. As we continued to go further into our interviews, it caught our attention that such feelings were going to be transcendental when the time came to decide when to leave. Sometimes we believe that it is a choice rather emotionally detached, however, it made a huge impact on our participants even before taking the next step of their journey.

“Strong reasons make strong actions” (Shakespeare, W)

The most difficult choices are the ones that generate an inner conflict, this is due that it leads us to confront ourselves, our insecurities, getting us out of our comfort zone to fulfill desires, dreams and hopes of perhaps a better future. Afterwards comes the time of making the choice, even if it seems to appear out of nowhere, leave? or stay? It is obvious that our travelers went for the second option, but what is not so obvious is the why. Why did they leave?

There are some that let themselves be influenced by tales that supposedly show the true reality of an unknown place and context. Trust is a tricky thing and believing someone blindly may not play in your favor.

Yo llegué a creer lo que me dijeron que aquí, que si yo venía y trabajaba duro mi hijo yo lo podía traer aquí y porque aquí salvaban hasta un muerto decía la gente y yo creía-todas eran historias que uno escuchaba

por una o por otra razón y entonces uno se maravillaba de todo lo que decían

Such “guidance” makes people generate the need to explore all their possibilities, believing they will find these opportunities in another country, like the “American dream”. People genuinely believe that by traveling to another place they will succeed in a way or another.

Giménez Romero (2003) explains the process of changing places, in this case, their place of origin so they could supply what they supposedly cannot unless they travel, wanting a life they can be proud of, which varies depending on the individual. These ideas make others take risks, in desperate moments, desperate choices. Especially in the case of a mother who is willing to sacrifice everything for her child. Her own reality made her feel forced to be determined to make a change.

Mi decisión fue como que más personal que como por otra cosa. Pero pues también había estado estudiando y como que no le veía mucho futuro a la cosa, entonces decidí decirle a mi tía ya por favor mejor si me quiero ir, aquí no voy a hacer nada, no voy a dedicarme a nada, yo veía pues que en el pueblo tampoco había muchas oportunidades y como que los muchachos se dedicaban a nada, a estar vagueando para aquí y para allá y las muchachas también ...

We find that a person’s reality can be determinant when the moment arrives to explore any option that separates them from the helpless surrounding situation. Here our participant contemplates her cultural context and comes to the conclusion that, if she

stays, she might not actually do anything that feels worth living for. This way the only reasonable choice was to move entirely from her home, drastic and without thinking twice since her situation did not seem to change for what Angelou hoped for.

La decisión fue más porque tenía más interés por China, a pesar de que nací en Colombia, me interesa más la cultura China, tiene como tres mil años de historia, por lo cual me parece más interesante. Además, otra razón fueron mis padres, porque ellos iban a Colombia desde China, y eso hizo que yo me interesara por volver al país del que ellos salieron.

Curiosity is a strong thing, more so when it comes to a strong sense of one's origins. Here Phileas demonstrates that perhaps the influence of two cultures that have built his identity as an individual led him to take upon himself to learn more about his second culture. This possibly flared an inner conflict to rebuild Phileas cultural identity. Molano (2007) refers to cultural identity as someone's sense of being part of a social group by understanding all its aspects, morally, spiritually and in the cultural sense.

Other decisions require a third party. These factors usually influence people's choices, making them question desires, and doubting the true reason for leaving.

pero pues que hubiera habido un momento en que haya decidido “ve, voy a tomar esa opción” no, yo creo que fue así como un proceso largo desde muy temprana edad. Algo muy lógico para mí que-el exterior, si ...

Teníamos la obligación de prestar servicio militar con la posibilidad de no prestarlo de forma tan militar, sino solicitar prestarlo en cooperación (...)

el ministerio era encargado de los reclutas que nos ponían a disposición de otro ministerio que tuviera misiones de cooperación en el exterior...

Even though Lodbrok expressed he had always had the desire to travel, in the end it was because of someone else's influence, and it came along with conditions and rules that Lodbrok needed to follow. Lodbrok's own country made the choice to send him away from home so he could fulfill a task or a duty, since it is hard to change cultural expressions like the law. Spencer-Oatey (2008) illustrates culture comes with assumptions, orientations, and procedures from cultural acts of a society that tend to be followed and shared by every social member.

De coup, je ne pouvais pas rentrer mon pays, parce qu'avec mon oncle, quand je rentrais au pays, il va m'a attrapé encore, il va me renvoyer, il va me frapper, tu vois, il va frapper ma mère aussi et tout du coup je pouvais pas rentrer. ... Voilà, je suis resté comme ça plusieurs mois, mais j'appelais ma mère tout moment, tous les jours j'appelle ma mère pour l'expliquer tout. Mais, quand même, je ne pouvais pas rentrer au pays au risque de créer des problèmes entre mon oncle qui a remarié ma mère. Ma mère, et du coup elle a trouvé une solution avec un de ces petit frères, qui étais à Dakar dans la capitale du Sénégal, elle a trouvé une solution, je suis venu chez lui, il m'a fait embarquer, je suis allé au Maroc

We already said that desperate moments require desperate choices. Here we find perhaps one of the most shocking moments from an interview. It is hard to imagine people go through such situations. We hear it on the news and perhaps read it on different

platforms, but we never get the full picture and feeling the way we did as we heard this person's story. Aronnax talked so naturally that his story can be considered a perfect example that sometimes cultural differences may clash with one another in ways that are hard to understand unless we are in their shoes.

Before the departure

At the end, preparing oneself to take the next step is not only important, but it can be quite stressful. Saying goodbye to the loved ones, family and friends as we may not see them in a long time or ever again gets a toll on anyone. Those feelings may prepare the travelers for a long trip to an unfamiliar place where they plan to settle in for a while.

Lodbrock narrates:

Pues es que el viaje fue como tan rápido, tan de inmediato que yo como que no tuve mucho tiempo realmente o todo pasó muy rápido y no recuerdo mucho, o realmente no me despedí como así no, porque realmente al principio como era solamente eran tres meses para saber si me iba a gustar o no, entonces como que supuestamente tenía la idea de que iba a regresar pronto o que si me iba, iba a ser poco tiempo o ya sea uno, dos o máximo tres años. Entonces como que me acuerdo de haberme despedido de mi familia así. Lloré, como que no me la creía si era verdad que iba a viajar, mi mamá estaba confiada porque pensaba que era poquito tiempo entonces estaba un poquito...Lloraba pero no estaba tan mal y...yo, no sé, fue como muy rápido ¿no? ...

Time can become the worst enemy when a journey seems imminent, hours appear to become shorter, as if each moment were not to last. At the end it never does, having so much to do eases the realization that the trip is about to happen. It's usual that planning is easier when it remains as a thought, but it becomes harder when it turns into reality.

Our emotions can make us go to the extreme as it happened with Angelou, the preparations (referring to paperwork) she made had little to no importance if we compare them to the emotional rollercoaster Angelou went through to "be ready" for the journey ahead, even so if still felt too fast to process.

According to Zlobina et al. (2004), we could say that here begin the early stages of the cultural shock of Angelou as she starts to make a conscious effort of processing what is ahead, which leads to such an emotional rollercoaster, leading to the early beginnings of symptoms we will be tackling later.

We can say the conscious efforts start to arise before the journey begins, the willingness to embrace the unknown forward arrival.

Eso fue una cosa muy rápido que se programó y ya. Entonces hablé con el papá de mi hijo que era mi esposo en ese entonces, hablé con él y le dije y pues él también dijo que si yo le dije "usted va a cuidar el niño, cuida mucho de él" él iba a cumplir siete años. Mi familia toda-pues toda no porque nosotros somos casi-pero si por ejemplo, tengo una hermana mayor que es hoy en día como la mamá de nosotros que no tenemos pero ella me dijo "sí, yo le colaboro con mi hijo" y ella era profesora, era directora de la escuela El Jardín y ella lo llevaba y lo traía en la moto con

ella, le enseñó, se llevó a un primito de él a enseñarle también para no separarlos para que no sufriera mucho por la ausencia de la mamá, (...) los dos andaban-mi hermana los llevaba y los traía, estaban junticos (...) para él no fue tan difícil, pero para mí sí fue muy difícil ...”

We believe no one is prepared to leave behind a child, less a mother whose determination forced her to believe she was doing right by her family. The uncertainty of whether or not Earhart's child would be in good hands, to feel at ease in a foreign country with the hope to be alongside her someday in a not-so-distant future. She was trying to get mentally ready to confront countless situations at the same time: travel to an unknown country, living without her child and her husband, to coexist with a society that she supposed she knew in part (which turned out she did not). All this in a short amount of time as her trip was so sudden. Surely it was not pleasant or facilitated affairs even more so when she had to travel by “unconventional” means.

Additionally, we achieve to partially comprehend the start of what we named in this work cultural assimilation, hearing the preparations leading to a new cultural context seem to begin with emotional situations as they need to make peace with the people and culture they are leaving behind. Friends and family are our loved ones, the ones we think we owe in a way or another to say proper goodbyes.

Por otro lado, antes de salir del país estaba muy ansioso, era la primera vez que salía solo del país, por lo que también estaba un poco asustado, pero ya cuando uno llega al destino es como que ya siente alivio ... Me sentía muy nostálgico, cuando uno sale del país de donde uno creció sabe

que lo va a extrañar, los paisajes y la comida. Sin embargo, uno está como preparado ... recuerdo que dos días antes de viajar hacia Bogotá, salí con unos amigos en moto a visitar pueblitos, hasta que me cansé y ya nos regresamos para Pasto. Esa ocasión visitamos como 4 o 5 pueblos de Nariño.

After we arrive at a new place, things that seemed trivial or unimportant suddenly take notice in a way people would have never thought before. Here, Phileas begins to remember the views Colombia has to offer alongside the gastronomy, two things he knew he was going to miss once he was gone. Phileas also remembers a trip he made with his friends knowing that those places would stick with him as they mention they traveled until Phileas sensed it had been enough. We could interpret it as Phileas first approach to devising a picture of what represents home before his journey, a picture that would accompany him throughout the journey ahead, later resting on his mind as a memory of what had once been a source of consolation.

Speaking of more than one expedition, we also came upon the case of two independent reasons to travel. About his reasons, Lokbrock states:

...Pues ninguna porque no lo elegí (risas) (...) En un principio no lo elegí porque pues eso fue dentro de ese proceso de candidatura para lo que se llamaba en esa época la cooperación internacional, o sea-bueno, para que entiendan un poquito, yo llegué acá de cierta forma prestando servicio militar, fue un servicio que no fue obviamente militar sino civil

...Teníamos la obligación de prestar servicio militar con la posibilidad de

no prestarlo de forma tan militar, sino solicitar prestarlo en cooperación (...) el ministerio era encargado de los reclutas que nos ponían a disposición de otro ministerio que tuviera misiones de cooperación en el exterior...”

At first, we could say Lodbrok had a business trip, which led to a life-changing decision as he somehow found himself falling in love with Popayán, choosing to spend his days in Colombia. Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) explain that a business trip can turn into a cultural adaptation as it becomes predictable that the person could become an expatriate thanks to several aspects involving personal and professional aspects inside and outside the job. For Annorax, reasons appeared in a different way :

Ma mère, elle a trouvé une solution avec mon frère, je suis venu chez lui, il m'a fait embarquer, je suis allé au Maroc. De Dakar je suis allé au Maroc, pas en avion, je ne suis pas allé en avion, clandestinement, comme ça. Voilà je suis allé au Maroc, je suis resté un peu mais ma mère avait tout payé au Sénégal, elle avait payé ce que je vais manger, mon transport et la traversé aussi, parce qu'il faut traverser la mer pour arriver en Espagne, et du coup je suis arrivé au Maroc, on est resté en peu, quand le jours y arrive, on m'a pris, on m'a mis dans un bateau, pas vraiment un bateau, en Zodiac si tu veux, un bateau pneumatique gonflable et on est monté, on est plus de 60 dans le bateau, on a poussé vers 6 du matin, on était arrivé dans le zone internationale vers 10h du matin, il y avait la Croix Rouge et

tout, ils nous ont récupéré, ils nous ont mis dans un gros bateau pétrolier, on est resté sur l'eau trois jours, sans manger, sans rien, 3 jours, sans avoir à manger, à voir, rien de tout. Et après ils nous ont posé en Espagne à Malaga ...

To call this a journey is an understatement, as one of our participants mentioned before, Annorax crossing resembled more the famous tale of The Odyssey. Risking his life for a better future, a new place to call home. It really seemed that his destiny was in the hands of unknown forces beyond his knowledge, we state this as Annorax struggled and survived in those harsh and unforgiving conditions, the same case of Odysseus who went across the impossible to return home.

Emotionally speaking there are moments in our life we prepare for something, even if it turns out you are running away to do so, but there is just this something that keeps calling, trying to reach you to go back, making us think that perhaps these emotional moments have the potential to transform into unpredictable acts.

The final choice

There is another last choice one must make before travelling. The traveler needs to wonder where to go, a place that represents more than a fresh start of something that made no sense anymore, perhaps simply a change for the better and maybe the mighty need of having new adventures. As Sergio Gonzales and Mark Smith (1998) said, going to a new place means breaking the routine, re-invent in all senses, finding yourself but in

a new way to live thanks to self-fed forces, new projects and feeling passion for the world once again. Earheart remembers,

tal vez yo era muy ingenua, aunque tenía veinticinco-cuando yo fui mamá tenía veinticinco años y yo oía las noticias y-¡las noticias no! oía que la gente llegaba de acá (Estados Unidos) y hablaba tantas cosas...

Suggestion is a powerful thing, most of the time we do not realize that perhaps we may say something that will impulse others to make certain choices. Here Earhart showed us that maybe we tend to believe that what is shown on the news and also stories from other people's experiences rather than to believe in a reality in which we are not comfortable with, which leads Earhart to make an extreme choice. About the same topic, Angelou remembers:

Bueno, yo creo que eso fue como desde que estaba en el colegio ¿más o menos? Por lo que mi familia pues tenía ya a mis dos tías aquí (Japón). Entonces como que lo pensé ¿no? cómo decir, no tanto de vivir vivir, pero sí de salir a conocer, de cómo de ver otras cosas ¿no? desde que salí del colegio. Antes de salir del colegio lo estuve pensando, lo hablé con mis tías y me dijeron que normal que si yo quería venir ya sea a conocer o a vivir que no había ningún problema...

For Angelou and her family it seemed like the logical choice for her to travel to Japan, having family roots from there and two aunts who were ready to support her. One way or another it was going to mean a new start without feeling a complete uncertainty,

but rather a family-like kind of start as Angelou and her family said it was the normal choice.

Sergio Gonzales and Mark Smith (1998) mentioned that the migration desire might be related with the idea of being reunited with one-self. In that aspect Angelou, having Japanese roots and family member in Japan, went on a journey to not only improve her chances of a promising future, but also to immerse in the Japanese culture who also was part of herself.

For other people like Phileas and Lodbrok the decision about this new place was more an escape from the routine they felt trapped in, also to venture in a new context which allowed them to experiment and discover new places, cultures and even a part of themselves they did not know it existed, maybe thought of, but never had seen. Phileas told us:

... dado a que mis padres son de China. Creo que eso generó en mí ese sueño de vivir acá en China, fue mi primer motivo. Además, también quería conocer más sobre la cultura de acá y la forma de pensar de mis padres, para entenderlos más, por el tema de que a los padres a veces uno no los entiende muy bien ...”

For Phileas, part of the motivation to choose his new place was to understand a family environment that even though was part of him, he did not feel like a whole, therefore he did not believe he could fully understand his loved ones unless he travelled to meet the country of his family's origins. Gonzales and Smith (1998) refer to the

adventure that generates the distance, as in the pouring we can build and define ourselves in a new or different context. About his destinations, Lodbrock confesses:

no escogí Colombia en un primer tiempo, pero al cabo de esa misión de cooperación duraba año y medio así que llegué a principios del 93 y mediados del 94 me regresé. Y al regresarme, pero ya antes de irme o sea realmente me regresé para Francia sintiendo las ganas de quedarme acá (Colombia), me regresé allá y pues definitivamente se confirmó que yo no había terminado mi ciclo aquí y ahí sí decidí devolverme a los seis meses. Y ahí sí fue por decisión propia...

Such “cyclic ritual” as mentioned by Gonzales and Smith (1998) results fascinating as it signifies a get away from cotidianity while presupposing a loss of the known and at the appealing of the unknown. People do not only fall in love with others, but they also fall in love with places, a sentiment hard to explain for our participants as they struggled, in a positive manner to express or find the why behind such sentiment.

Sadly, for others, choosing a country is not exciting or in any means an adventure. For others, it involves the opposite. Atxotegui (2000) says that events like migration are situations of change that not only produces benefits but also a series of tensions and loss. As we have mentioned before, Aronnax had different tales to tell:

“... elle (ma mère) avait payé ce que je vais manger, mon transport et la traversée aussi, parce qu'il faut traverser la mer pour arriver en Espagne... j'aime pas l'Espagne, pour moi, il était difficile de m'intégrer en Espagne, déjà la langue, je parle pas espagnol ... au pays en Guinée je me

débrouille pas mal en français, si tu veux. à l'école on étudiait le français. Et, de coup, je parlais en peu le français, j'écrivais tout, si c'est nécessaire de venir en France. Et vu que je jouais le football aussi en Guinée, J'ai décidé de tenter ma tante pour jouer Foot, si non, étudier, et ça serait facile pour m'intégrer en fait. Il avait mon oncle, il avait un petit frère à ma mère qui est en France. De coup, il m'a payé le pied aux billets des bus, j'ai pris le bus de l'Espagne jusqu'à en France, et je suis arrivé à Toulouse...

On his journey to save his life, Aronnax had to start from scratch and could not find a place to fit it. Still, he never gave up and as fate would have it he recalled in his memories a loved one followed by a language rather familiar too. Such a destination led him to a place he could finally call home, France allowed Aronnax to adapt, overcome and settle in.

Throughout these experiences that our participants shared with us, we noticed the first sighting of cultural assimilation as all stepped forward in order to begin a new life in a different country despite all the negative aspects or repercussions these could lead them to, from tearing apart families to fear of the unknown which made them feel sadness, nostalgic or insecure.

Nevertheless, there were also positive outcomes, a glimpse of a future that could satisfy not only immediate or material needs but also satisfy our participants one-self, they became fulfilled and learned skills that others do not possess as they have not experienced what these individuals have.

In this fashion the cultural assimilation process begins before the journey, you start to catch sight of the first signals from a behavioral perspective, what our participants went through towards their feelings and how they prepared their goodbyes (ritual) to then arrive to their destination, ready to unravel what was ahead of them. We could wrap up this first section with a quote by Rodriguez and Smith (1998):

El viaje nunca se realiza a lo totalmente desconocido. El paisaje, el idioma, las costumbres, pueden ser extrañas, pero se ha prefigurado lo que queremos y podemos encontrar, del mismo modo, que tenemos dibujado, lo que queremos dejar atrás, o lo que queremos reinventar en nuestra vivencia y relación con el viaje. En este sentido el viaje es una metáfora del deseo. El deseo se construye desde la carencia.

The beginning of the metamorphosis

Does this really feel like home?

From the moment someone arrives at their destination, it is normal to experience waves of emotions where a person may feel frightened, disappointed, excited, or relieved. The change begins as humans must adapt to the new culture to experience any kind of success (be it professional or personal), but change is not always easy and may not even happen at all. As Ward, Bochner & Furnham (2001) affirm, it really depends on the case, on the person and on the impact of the outside influence, referring to the concept of cultural contact that comes along with certain traits that we will address in this section.

Molding our cultural identity implies to achieve an integration as smooth as possible not only for others but to one's self improvement. This way, cultural assimilation

emerges when these emotional aspects rise in a migrant who wishes to fit in -be it temporary or permanent- to merge with the people and culture surrounding them, like one of participants manifested “*lo que quisiera uno sería fundirse en el paisaje y no tener ni color ni olor ni sabor ... o sea es fundirse, no distinguirse*”.

Considering the emotional aspects mentioned, it may take a while for someone to process the fact that they are in a new place. When people travel due to specific reasons such as building a new life, finding a place to call home or a workplace, success does not come easy. Time goes fast and migrants face different challenges. Earhart recalls,

¡Uy no! Yo sufrí mucho, dos años yo lloraba, yo lloraba. Muy duro, es duro... Llegar uno aquí sin tener a nadie, no conocer a nadie, yo pasé muchísimas cosas, pero muchísimas cosas ... a mí me tocó pasar por los latinos esos que lo llevaban a uno a trabajar y no le pagaban. Lo llevaban, uno iba y trabajaba por nada en una semana...somos los mismos latinos los que nos ponemos a pelear entre nosotros mismos ¿sabes?...es que los propios latinos son llenos de egoísmo.

The sad part of becoming a migrant is to arrive at a place where you hope to meet honest people, not to be mistreated but rather welcomed, especially by a community you know you belong to. Sadly, in Earhart’s case, it was quite the opposite as she felt betrayed by the Latino community. Earhart expressed that as she looked for support from her fellow Latinos, even though the majority were from different cultural backgrounds, she still expected it regardless; after all, we share enough similarities to be classified into a group, but not enough to call ourselves identical.

Her intercultural encounters were rather counterproductive, ending in a negative review on her first years of her cultural assimilation experience. As Ward, Bochner & Furnham (2001) manifested, when these encounters occur, it really depends on the approach, which can be individual or collective, that allows people to shape their own intercultural interactions based on their personal experiences.

Arriving at a new place is not always difficult, the itinerary however may distract or entertain us enough to not experience any of these aspects in the first months of arrival. On the other hand, remaining in a country may be the real challenge. Angelou realizes,

... al principio no tanto porque todo era nuevo para mí y estaba en constante movimiento, de un trabajo para otro, de una ciudad a otra. No hubo choque, no sentí al principio, ¿creo que eso vino quizás seis años después? Hubo realmente el choque porque yo me quedé prácticamente sola. Obviamente por decisión propia, porque estaba trabajando en otra parte, vivía sola, empecé a sentir lo que realmente era la cultura en sí, como de vivencia de estadía, porque Japón es un país en que solamente se enfoca en el trabajo ...

As we continue to affirm, each experience is unique. Here, Angelou is a perfect example that perhaps the beginning is not always what we expect, on the contrary, the difficult part may come later on, meaning that the cultural assimilation process starts when someone actually faces the reality after coming out of their comfort zone.

Angelou's cultural assimilation started when she moved on her own, she made her choice not realizing what was ahead, therefore it took a toll on her as she came to the realization of what the Japanese culture really was. Herrera (1994) defines this process as quite complex as it involves collectivity, emphasizes in new arrivals and natives and implies coming to terms with their coexistence. Angelou's terms were that Japanese culture revolves around work, leaving the social part as a no priority.

Sometimes it is not the move itself. The time of departure hits differently when a person travels and certain events take place on certain dates. The cultural context in these occasions represents a significant first impression of what they miss and what they live.

Los primeros meses, de septiembre a diciembre tuve bajón de ánimo por la temporada de navidad ... La comida. El 31 mis padres suelen hacer comida más elegante, como el pavo relleno, y eso, hasta los buñuelos, pero acá no se cocina así. También los alumbrados, los cuales son muy diferentes en Colombia y China, acá se ven drones, árboles y así, mientras que en Colombia se ve mucho son los animales con luces, regalos, papá Noel, cosas así, acá no se ve tanto eso, ya que no creen en la navidad, sólo los jóvenes y los niños que más o menos creen ...

Phileas narrated how his cultural context signified an emotional impact, even though he is half-Chinese and made the decision to travel as he felt the desire to get to know this culture. He could not avoid the bittersweet excitement as he remembered the Colombian traditions regarding Christmas in comparison to the Chinese ones. Among the emotional impact that culture carries, nostalgia can trigger certain psychological

responses as Phileas experienced a “bajón” (which means to feel in low spirits”).

Almost the same experience occurred to Lodbrok,

...lo que pasa es que como yo les dije, yo venía por un tiempo relativamente corto, venía por año y medio, venía en condiciones muy buenas, económicas muy buenas. Era no más descubrir, disfrutar, apreciar, era un paseo eh, la verdad era un paseo, un paseo total ... cuando regresé en el 95 ya me venía supuestamente a radicar, entonces ya no era un paseo. Eso implicaba muchas cosas de tamaño mayor ¿no? Porque sí, era mi vida que supuestamente decidía establecer acá con todo lo que implica renunciar allá...Ahí fue cuando de pronto se produjo-no sé, choque cultural no porque al fin y al cabo-bueno la adaptación cultural ya la había tenido en el primer periodo, pero de pronto ahí al cabo de determinado tiempo de estar acá habiendo decidido quedarme, instalarme, ahí sí hubo un periodo de conflicto entre mi identidad francesa y mi -posible identidad colombiana ...

In some way, Lodbrok was prepared for any future outcome regarding his cultural adaptation and therefore assimilation process. We could say it was smoother for him than others. Having the opportunity to travel two times gave Lodbrok quite a perspective on how to prepare himself and what would follow once he arrived with intentions of staying indefinitely in his country of choice.

As some had it a little easier, it was not the case for everyone here in this work, the cultural contrast sometimes can be quite overwhelming or surprising for others, as it was for Annorax,

En fait, au tout début, c'était le sentiment de réussite quelque part, parce que je voulais quand même venir, je voulais quand même arriver en France, j'ai trouvé une partie de ma famille qui est ici, et m'installais aussi, et faire mes études et vivre en France aussi...quelque part c'est le sentiment de réussite. Et, j'avais aussi quand même, quelque part dans un coin de la tête, un sentiment de déception, le fait d'oublier, le fait de laisser, une partie de ma famille comme ma maman, au pays, et le fait de changer de climat parce qu'il fait très froid ici, et j'étais déçu au début, mais, mais franchement ça va, parce que maintenant ça va j'ai réussi à m'intégrer et tout va bien dans le bon sens ...

Here it was a case of surprise and wonder, as before his eyes there was a scenario that Annorax only imagined unfolded, a sense of pride and achievement that he had finally succeeded in his journey. Although, it came alongside longing as Aronnax missed dearly his loved ones that sadly could not be with him in this new chapter of his life.

Between the sentiment of achieving the impossible, Aronnax could not forget his origins due to the sentiment of abandonment was present in his mind “*un sentiment de déception, le fait d'oublier, le fait de laisser une partie de ma famille, comme ma maman*” still, he remained strong and was able to keep going forward and thanks to that he became the person he is nowadays.

Reflecting on Kapuscinski, R (2012) “liberarse de la propia cultura cuesta muy caro. Por eso es tan importante tener una identidad propia, distinta, y una idea aproximada de nuestra fuerza, valor y madurez. Sólo entonces podremos encarar confiadamente otra cultura.”, we can understand that though Aronnax left, his mind was anchored, bound to his family back home, which explains the sentiment of abandoning his loved ones and at the same time, his own identity made him realize the strength and courage within himself, allowing him to embrace the happiness of reaching his goal.

First impressions never have a second chance and last forever

Inhabiting a new place does not only involve moving, as we mentioned prior to this part, but there are also several aspects to take into consideration as well. How someone is welcomed also influences greatly their cultural assimilation process as they adapt to this new environment. We found in our interviews that depending on our participants' experiences their new cultural identities were molded, thus referring to their judgment of others to their actions as well.

As Kapuscinski, R (2012) said “Deberíamos buscar el diálogo y el entendimiento con el nuevo Otro. Los años vividos entre pueblos remotos me enseñaron que la bondad hacia el prójimo es la única actitud que puede tocar el punto sensible, humano, del Otro. ¿Quién será este nuevo Otro? ¿Cómo será nuestro encuentro con él? ¿Qué diremos y en qué idioma? ¿Podremos escucharnos mutuamente? ¿Podremos comprendernos?”. We found this passage appropriate to this segment as all these questions felt answered in a way or another with our interviews.

Angelou's first encounters with Japanese and their culture gave us a clear perspective of her own experience.

aquí los japoneses son más en su trabajo, en sus cosas y nosotros los extranjeros, bueno los latinos preferimos más estar en casa, compartir con la familia, dedicarnos más...Estar en el trabajo es importante pero lo primero es la familia. Entonces sí es un poco brusco el choque de la cultura porque somos muy diferentes. Incluso para salir con-yo ya he salido con japoneses y es bien...Siempre dicen que los japoneses son bien fríos, que son así que son así, sí son un poco fríos la verdad, no son tan cariñosos, tan amorosos como nosotros, sí somos bien diferentes ...

First, Angelou could not help but make a comparison between her Colombian culture and the Japanese one to understand better the way Japanese handle social relationships. For Angelou to mention such comparisons lead her to create agreements that allowed her to find a point so she could integrate successfully in the culture, accepting that the differences from one culture to another did not necessarily mean a bad thing, her willingness helped her to flourish in her new environment regarding her social life.

Exposing how interculturality influences migrants' lives in their new context and therefore how they decide to proceed on a daily basis, Villodre (2012) explains that interculturality considers the interrelationships based on recognizing and acknowledging the cultures that are in contact in a non-harmful way in which creates a respectful space

that allows diversity and an open mind while interacting. Meanwhile, maybe the smallest daily activities can be quite traumatic for others, which may not even involve a direct individual interaction. Earhart told us,

Al principio saber andar en esta ciudad-aunque yo no trabajara con latinos y todo, que yo no sabía el inglés, uhhh yo me perdía y yo lloraba en las estaciones de tren, yo no sabía andar, a mí me decían que “tiene que mirar el nombre...” hasta una señora llegó a decirme que “yo cuando llegué aquí, yo ponía señales, dejaba una cosita ahí para poder volver a tener que pasar por ahí” y yo pensaba y yo decía “pero cómo si todo andan limpiando, andan moviendo, ¿cómo será eso?” uhhh pero me tocó que hacer... Cuando me dijeron que había que montarse en un tren yo ví que eso salía que (silbido - veloz) como una bala y esa bulla y eso lleno yo dije “wow”, yo primero me quedé parada, me quedé ahí y me asusté, y ya después uno se acostumbra que uno se sube a un tren y que esas son unas inmensidades de largas, y eso va llenísimo de gente (...). La vida sí es muy diferente aquí en todo sentido...”

It is important to anyone to be able to travel from one place to another in any country as transportation allows us to be able to fulfill immediate needs related to economic and social aspects of what we consider a normal life (like working, shopping, hanging out with others, etc). For Earhart the subway was quite a challenge and at first a traumatic experience as she had to get lost several times until she got the hang of it, she

even narrates how lost she got that she ended up in places where most people would not go willingly as their own safety was at risk.

Despite all these adversities, Earhart showed that her constant interaction with her new context allowed her to find balance, assimilating all of this into her new normal, that later became easier and regular. It also helped that a piece of advice that came from someone who experienced the same eased Earhart to keep trying.

There is an important notion regarding the city. Cities are not only exterior structure additions, but they also wire our own internal cities, our mental geography. When we are faced by extreme wire city changes, it affects these internal maps in which we molded our quotidian and guided our perceptions. The train is not solely a transport method, but an organized way of life and time distribution. The train is the noise and the new time of the big city that makes you feel tiny, foreign, and sometimes, run over.

Perhaps being open-minded may not always be a good thing in certain contexts, especially the ones who are very reserved and strict in their ways, although it may be even harder when you feel like you are divided in opinions thanks to your origins. Phileas admitted,

A pesar de que mis padres son de China, yo crecí en Colombia. Mi forma de pensar no es como de los colombianos, pero tampoco es como la de los chinos, es como un 50/50 ... Además, la mentalidad de la gente de acá es muy cerrada, están en un cuadro y de ahí no se salen; también tienen como su propio “guarapo” y sus propias redes sociales.

Cultural conceptions are sometimes too strong in a society to the point where you must reserve yourself in fear of any harm. Phileas felt the need to harmonize the best way possible, so it was key to find the right moment in strategic situations to avoid possible and unnecessary conflicts, negotiating his co-presence in the new social context (Herrera, 1994).

Continuing with these negotiations regarding social interactions, others could have another reality that may as well impact their views regarding their assimilation process. It is like this that Lodbrok made peace in a way with his new reality in Colombia.

Suena un poquito raro, pero diría el individualismo, sí, el individualismo acá...Lo que entiendo por individualismo es tal vez la capacidad que tiene aquí a veces la gente de despreocuparse por el otro. Yo llevo mi camino, yo llevo mi ritmo, yo llevo mi vida, yo llevo mi forma de ser, el que está al lado pues que se...Cómo decir... Ojalá le guste y si no le gusta pues igual no...

Creating agreements with a new cultural environment is not always easy, more when these make us feel unsure if our interpretation may be accurate, it is when the cultural assimilation process emerges to help us to deal with certain situations such as this. Lodbrok is used to respecting the boundaries and personal space of others; people mind their own business and do not disrespect others with actions that may alter the peace in a neighborhood. However, he had to learn to deal with these aspects of his new

country. Migrants in their new cultural and social context need to learn to accept all the positive and negative outcomes that come from moving to a new place.

Some experienced certain liberties in their growth, these became natural to them and when faced with a different reality can become a memorable experience that later may still linger on their minds.

Depuis tout petit, depuis tout petit, comme ça, on est libre en fait, on est libre on fait presque tous que nous voulons ... Après en France j'ai senti un peu différente, en France les enfants sont plutôt à l'école, toute la journée, ils sont sert des divertissements, mais qui sont inclus dans les cours de l'école. Quand tu vas à l'école au matin, tu reviens le soir ...

For Aronnax, cultural conception of freedom is related to children in Guinea, specifically in the place he was raised. Freedom was a cultural non-negotiable value; it is expected for children to enjoy at their own pace their childhood while it lasted. Spencer-Oatey (2008) expresses the fuzziness that comes with culture as it really depends on basic terms involving values, life assumptions and others which are taken as normal by a society. On the contrary, Aronnax sees that it is not the same in France as children have a right to go to school and spend several hours there, he gives a hint of it being as if children were losing precious time of self-discovery, wonder, and adventure. In this case, we have an example of cultural contact respecting a value system regarding how to raise children, mentioned by Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001).

Hardships are part of life

It is believed that the first few months will always be difficult for anyone to adjust and usually that is the case, the existence of these new cultural values, norms, beliefs alongside its people are characteristics that can represent a challenge. There are things that can clearly disturb a person, while there are others that even though they are complex can result fascinating and tempting.

In that matter, intercultural contact occurs in a wide range and is unique to each individual. Bochner (1982) refers to one of the two types of intercultural contacts, in this case is when someone from a country travels to a foreign one for any reason, which produces the interaction of two different cultures automatically as the foreign person carries its own culture within them. So, it is the unusual case of a migrant that explains why it was not difficult or represented that much of a challenge as she passed her first few months in her new country.

Pues problemas a ver...Pues aparte del cambio tan extremo en cultura (...) De un momento a otro llegas aquí, pues igual yo llegaba a la casa de mi tía, que es como mi otra mamá, entonces estaba bien ... Después de un mes fue que ya empecé a trabajar y si fue un poco difícil, creo que en ese sentido nunca tuve problemas con las personas porque realmente eran extranjeros...

For Angelou the difficult part began way later as she ventured further into the Japanese culture, since she was able to interact with people who belonged to the Latino community who the vast majority share and speak the same language, only with certain particular and unique differentiated characteristics. Angelou was in a comfort zone which protected her from certain bad experiences and from direct contact with the Japanese culture. This comfort would abandon Angelou at some point.

For Ward, Bochner & Furnham (2011), it is normal for a person to resist change when it comes to facing a new reality, they explain that this happens when two cultures clash within a person. It happens when the culture from which someone was raised represents their truth, therefore this truth seems contradictory to the new one they are facing. Change is hard and produces a level of fear that influences a migrant's cultural assimilation process, in this case, Angelou's took more time as she first found a safe place that did not challenge her enough to continue her development until further in time.

For others, their own community was what made their own process harder than it should be. It is common for us to try and find a safe space with people we can relate to, when this is not the case, we cannot help but feel betrayed by our own kind.

Remembering a fond memory that makes you feel cozy and warm inside is something that helps to endure the adversities, nonetheless when that memory is forced to change for a new one it can become grinding. Lodbrock remembers,

Para mí la Navidad es frío, para mí la navidad es-era, para mí la navidad eran jornadas, días cortos de invierno, era el olor a pino en la casa, cenas de nochebuena largas, largas, interminables, era zapatos puestos al pie

del árbol para que Papá Noel bajara por la chimenea dejara los regalos, obviamente yo ya tenía veintipico de años y no creía en eso, pero sin embargo era eso. El niño dios no intervenía no, y era el veinticinco-el veinticuatro ir a misa con mis papás, mis hermanos y cenar cosas que aquí no...”

It is inevitable to compare a festivity such as Christmas while being in a foreign country, especially since all Christmas around the world is celebrated in so many ways. Christmas is a time where most spend it with their loved ones, adding to the feeling of nostalgia and probably disappointment as you cannot recognize the fuzziness and joy it usually sparks within you. Lodbrok's first Christmas in Colombia was not a success for these reasons.

It is strange to feel and not to feel part of a culture, knowing deep inside you there is an unknown part of you, more so when others expect you to be something that you are not just by looking at you.

Me sentía asustado porque no sabía qué hacer, me tocaba con traductores online, después de 2 meses ya fui conociendo cómo debía moverme, pero aún con el traductor me daba pena porque mis rasgos físicos son chinos, entonces me preguntaban que por qué no hablaba el idioma, eso me daba mucha pena, me tocaba decir que mis padres son de China pero que yo fui formado en el extranjero, y ya ahí me ayudaban y me explicaban, a veces hasta me enseñaban palabras en mandarín...

Phileas felt worried and guilty as he had the need to use technology to communicate at first, more due to other Chinese questioning as to why someone who looked like them was not able to speak like them as well. Phileas felt the constant need to explain himself to everyone in order to be accepted and shown comprehension or kindness. Soto and Madkouri (2006) affirm that the acquisition of a second language is unique to each individual where several factors intervene in such a process; it is never the same for everyone.

Also, in some occasions, there is the sentiment of wanting to belong or be a part of a community that we feel close to and we wish to be welcomed with open arms, sadly there is the other scenario, the one that is hostile towards newcomers. It was like this for Aronnax,

Je considère que ça peut aller car, c'est vrai que je parle français, mais on n'a pas le même accent, Ils savent que t'es pas français, même si t'es noir, même si tu parles trop bien le français, et au fond, ils savent que t'es pas français. Et ça me reconforte pas totalement, par exemple, sur le lieu public et tout j'ose pas parler en haute voix, parce que je parle pas comme eux. En fait, du coup je parle normal, je ne hausse pas le ton pour que tout le monde m'entend, qu'ils me fixent comme ça pour dire « c'est qui con ? ». C'est un peu aussi, ta façon de parler ils vont te qualifier, ils vont... même s'ils vont pas le dire directement...

No matter how much Aronnax tries to mold himself to be accepted, he made peace with himself some time ago that this may never occur. Aronnax explains that just

by his looks and accent French people in his area will always qualify him as intruder or impostor. Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2011) say that the hypothesis regarding cultural distance becomes wider as the gap between individuals of different cultures makes it harder for newcomers to fit into a society. We also believe there is more in-depth in these words, however we will explore this in the next section.

There is no place like home...Unless...

As the time comes by and we start spending it in a new environment full of new costumes, traditions, and other cultural aspects, it is expected that anyone begins to adapt and therefore comes change be it for example in behavior or your way of thinking.

Zoblina, Basabe and Páez (2004) affirm that it is a must to understand the connotation of culture in order to understand people and its differences as they come from different countries alongside the hardships they face in their new environment as they try to adapt to it.

One of the many possibilities that may occur is that someone gets so used and satisfied in the new home that they may not want to leave. They may want to come back to their origins only to visit. This is the case of Earhart as she affirms,

no me gusta ya ir pá Colombia, vivir en Colombia yo creo que yo ya no voy a poder (...) uno de ver la vida tan rica que lleva toda esa gente de aquí, uno no tiene que si no trabajar y todo. Uno se volvió aquí como una máquina y a uno no le gusta perder el tiempo, yo ya a mí me gusta ir a trabajar donde me tengan activa todo el tiempo...

For some perhaps it is impossible to affirm that another country may provide better comfort than their old homes where most of their loved ones reside. Nevertheless, Earhart did not hesitate to reassure several times during the whole interview that she loves living in the USA so much that she does not want to go back and settle in again in her original country at all. Earhart's cultural assimilation process became so strongly rooted in her new culture that if she ever went back to live in Colombia, she would not be able to feel at ease, she would be a stranger in her own old country, thus her cultural identity transformed in a sense.

Molano (2007) says that identity is not a non-changing concept, on the contrary, it recreates within a person and collectively, it continues to feed by outside influence. A culture as a whole can become a huge impact that leads to change.

La verdad que Japón te cambia, aparte de que te vuelve más consciente de muchas cosas porque la cultura es muy correcta, respetar más que todo, el respeto en la calle ... Tu vas a tu país y la verdad me ha chocado las veces que he ido a Colombia porque uno aquí está acostumbrado a la atención al cliente es muy importante porque el cliente es el que realmente da el trabajo o sea en un restaurante por ejemplo (...) La atención al cliente, la diferencia, el cliente siempre tiene como un poco más de respeto en los restaurantes y todo... y la vez que fui a Colombia choqué un poco porque fui a un restaurante con mi mamá y para empezar se demoraron en venir a

preguntarnos que queríamos, entonces llegamos, nos sentamos y si se demoraron un poco en la atención

Angelou affirmed that Japanese culture made her have another perspective in life, which shifted her own behavior to become a more proper person as she expressed during our meeting. This is an example of how a host culture during cultural assimilation molded Angelou's whole self and changed her views of her old country, although unlike Earhart she does not feel ill towards her origin place.

On the other hand, maybe it is your old home that may offer better possibilities at times than your new place. Phileas affirmed,

Mi forma de pensar ya no es tan cerrada, por ejemplo, en Colombia se cree que los asiáticos todos son iguales, y uno llega acá y se da cuenta que eso no es así. Por ejemplo, se diferencia mucho los de Singapur, los coreanos, etc. La gastronomía también cambia, por ejemplo, ya no se puede comer serpientes, perros, etc., sólo se puede comer pollo cerdo y ovejas, vacas no hay acá, son muy pocas las que hay. Además, es muy caro, el cerdo, la res, todo eso es muy caro en comparación de Colombia, algo que allá sale mucho más económico que acá...

Phileas was one to use one positive and negative outcome regarding his own comparison between Chinese and Colombian culture regarding typical scenarios, allowing us to dive a little into our own views and culture, maybe a little self-conscious as he highlighted that typical stereotype of how Colombians recall a lot of Asians from specific physical traits as all being Chinese. Grimson (2008) explains better that people

tend to compare cultures from a particular judgmental view, not giving thought that perhaps those other cultures we could attempt to really get to know and understand.

Some people understood they had to make a process that would allow them to come to terms with their new cultural context, in this way being able to learn and make changes that may not be easy due to the way our cultural identity was built. Lokdbrock recognized,

He aprendido aquí tal vez a dimensionar lo que realmente es importante y lo que no lo es tanto, o sea, yo llegué muy francés, sigo siendo muy francés pero como buen europeo, me imagino...Lo que...No se podía...Programar, organizar con suficiente tiempo, organizar, controlar...Entraba en unos estados de estrés ... Yo llego a Francia y ahí sí siento que yo tengo un manejo del tiempo que ya no es el de Francia definitivamente. Pito en los semáforos pues que mi mamá me dice “¿por qué pitas?” y yo (risas) porque ya pasó a verde y no ha arrancado todavía (risas) entonces cosas así (risas)...

There are actions that are defined by each culture such as time management, how to deal with stress, make plans and organize a daily routine. All this can crumble at the moment we face a new culture because it can signify a shift of all these factors that lead our lives. That being said, it leads to the realization that a change must be done. Lodbrok, however, recalled these situations while laughing, in a joyful attitude unlike some of our participants.

As we mention daily routine activities, for Aronnax the biggest deal in need of adapting was his eating habits.

Façon de penser je crois pas, je crois pas mais j'ai changé quelques habitudes quand même, là, il faut tout faire un tout planifié, au pays on s'en foutait ... j'ai changé mes habitudes pour manger, je suis obligé parce que je suis obligé de manger trois fois par jour, mais je mange quand même 3 fois par jour, le matin, midi, et 19h... Et quelques fois je fais un goûter à 17h... ”

For him it was remarkable that eating so many times a day was necessary in France, Aronnax expressed it as he had no choice but to adapt. This aspect of his new life became Aronnax's regular routine reluctantly.

Grimson (2008) highlights that there is no genetic explanation for all the cultural values for all the cultures around the world. Cultural diversity is not something that carries down by blood, it is learnt, built and molded in social life. Through contact with others that allow an individual's personal growth, setting the bases of their own concept of culture and identity.

You will always find your way back home, or your home will find its way back to you

It is said that there is no place like home, although after living an exceptionally long time in another place, acquiring a new lifestyle, swapping routines, returning to your origin place may not make you feel at home again, rather misplaced. The thought of

returning to the place that saw you be born always will bring up contradicting feelings, happiness, nostalgia, excitement, and other sentiments. Angelou affirms,

He viajado unas cuatro veces ¿quizás? más o menos. La primera vez viajé con lo del terremoto, que fueron tres años después de lo que yo llegué, (Japón) luego ese mismo año. Después de ese año estaba viajando cada año, en diciembre viajaba, ya la última vez que viajé fueron como hace seis años atrás, hace seis años que no regreso a Colombia. Pero los sentimientos desde que tú dices voy a viajar y compras el pasaje, no ves la hora de irte al aeropuerto y largarte (risas) la verdad es una emoción... No sé, no se puede describir la emoción que uno siente de todo el viaje ... vas mirando en el mapa el avioncito y ya el aeropuerto y va bajando el avión y ves las nubes y ves como los cultivos de caña en Cali y toda esa zona, pues los alrededores y sientes como que dices “¡Ay dios mío llegué!” ... Es como una emoción que le da a uno en el pecho como un vacío, como un nudo en la garganta de querer abrazar al de enseguida y decir “¡llegué, volví!” la verdad es que es una emoción, es indescriptible lo que uno siente la verdad y bajarte del avión y ese olor como que uno sabe ¿no? el olor característico de los lugares...

Reliving all fond memories related to senses like smell and hearing really puts in perspective how much you missed a place as you once again arrive no matter your motives. Angelou mentioned for starters how looking outside the window and finding herself with all the typical and familiar views of Colombia made everything come back to

her, returning her Colombian identity that felt lost for a very long time. Afterward came the expression Angelou mentioned to herself as she arrived, the exhilarating emotions and disbelief she was once again, back in her first country and with her loved ones.

For Latinos family is crucial. Marín and VanOss (1991) identified in their work some aspects of Latino culture regarding loved one, such as the strong bond and identification with people of a family nucleus and extensive family (sometimes not being by blood at all, adopted members), alongside strong feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity. Angelou's bonds with her family are extraordinarily strong, we took notice as she emphasized during the whole process that her family ties were really important and a constant emotional support in good and bad times in her cultural assimilation process.

Discovering the sentiment of happiness with what once surrounded you as you return can be the biggest happiness of it all.

... Là ça dépend, moi depuis que je suis arrivé en France, je suis retourné au pays une fois, une fois. Je voulais aller l'été dernier, il y avait la covid et du coup j'ai pas pu y aller ... c'est sentiment de joie, de retrouver ma famille, mes amis d'enfance, de trouver mon quartier où j'ai grandi, c'est tout l'impression en fait de retourner au pays, voir ta maman, tes petites frères, c'est vraiment, c'est vraiment une sentiment extrêmement fort en fait, si tu veux ...

Aronnax here explained to us the overjoy of seeing again that place that signified everything in his childhood, emphasizing that it was an extremely strong sentiment which he could not put into words during the interview. But it was clear that his tone and

passion when saying so was indescribable and at the same time, relatable to probably anyone's happiest moments of their life. Aronnax was also happy to be reunited once again with his family, neighbors, childhood friends and acquaintances, Aronnax gave importance to his surroundings and afterwards the reunion which combined seemed the trigger of such happiness.

For others, these feelings may vary as they may only be fond of certain specific places as with time comes change, especially for places. Once you come back it is expected for a place to have changed throughout the years. Earhart remembers,

...Yo mi lugar de nacimiento sí lo quiero mucho, a mí me gustó mucho ir a mi lugar de nacimiento. Me gustó que pude hacer allá una casita en la vereda donde yo nací, a mí me gustó y yo si disfruté mi casa (...) pero que rico mi vereda, me gustó y me gustó ver a la gente con la que yo- con ella fue con la que yo quise disfrutar, andar allá, sabroso (...) yo no quiero saber nada de la ciudad de Santander de Quilichao, a mí no me gusta allá pero me gusta es mi campo, ay que rico, yo no creí cuando yo llegué allá le cuento, me gustó mucho...

In Earhart's experience, her place of birth continues to signify the excitement of reliving fond memories, her past is what created her feelings nowadays towards the present of what is now her hometown. Earhart wished to find a place that remains in her memories during her stay in the USA and she loved coming back to the countryside, finding herself among the native nature which was familiar to her, it was pleasant until she found herself in the part of town, a place that also signified the same but only

remained in her mind. Earhart expressed distress and described it as a traumatic experience to be back in town, all the changes throughout time took their toll on her which ended up in her hating on what her hometown had become.

On the contrary, we also find that where others seem to fit right in again or despise coming back in a sense, others are excited and embrace the whole experience of what is happening in the present, even though it feels as if you do not completely come back at all.

Durante mucho tiempo estuve viajando una vez al año, últimamente estaba viajando-pero es mucho, estaba viajando cada seis meses, pues ese aumento en la frecuencia es porque mis papás van envejeciendo y entonces uno quiere aprovechar para salir, compartir y eso si ... regresando acá uno a veces se siente muy francés, chocando con ciertas cosas que para el resto de la gente no representa problema, pero entonces cuando uno llega allá (...) Yo aterrizo en París y es como ponerme pantuflas, uno siente que “llegué a mi casa”, todo parece de repente obvio, todos los avisos, las propagandas, los afiches, los carteles todo “así tiene que ser” es obvio. Y sin embargo, llega siempre el momento en que uno siente que desencaja, hace cosas que la gente casi lo mira raro, hay siempre el momento en que uno aunque sea por la mente se transporta para acá (Colombia)busca...Llega un momento en que uno busca Colombia ... Sí, yo siento cuando estoy allá que miro las cosas desde otro ángulo, no como uno de allá-como les digo esto...Como un poco turista

aunque...Es mi casa, es mi país-ya iba a decir es “mi gente” pero no sé si sea mi gente todavía o sea, es mi casa, es mi país, de allá vengo, allá tengo mis raíces, me siento muy bien allá...Cuando estoy allá lo vivo, lo miro, alrededor mío, observo la gente con una cierta distancia ... me siento francés pero tal vez me siento francés de paso...

Lodbrok expressed he now sees France, his birthplace, from a certain distance, a new perspective. Lodbrok was pushed to be more in contact with France as his parents are aging, increasing his trips back to France. As he has a fresh experience, he was able to elaborate more on his encounters with French culture, Lodbrok expresses he has the sensation of wearing slippers and even feels a little more now like half a tourist and at the same time he feels he has returned home. Nevertheless, it comes the time where he feels misplaced, he may do things unconsciously which are uncommon in France due to Lodbrok's Colombian lifestyle that emerges in his behavior involuntarily, all this leading to long to be in Colombia once again.

Lodbrok's and our participants' cultural assimilation, also involves the interaction between two cultures that now are part of their own identity. Grosjean (2015) gives insight on identity, as there are bilingual individuals, those who speak two or more languages; and bicultural ones those who have more than one culture. These two can be present in a person and thus make them unique.

As we wrap up this section of analysis, we realized the fact that we did not only interview people that were able to speak more than one language, but also as people who began their cultural assimilation process and their cultural identities began a

transformation, flourishing in their new environment and becoming part of it. Thus, they also acquired their new culture as part of themselves, becoming people with more than one culture, bilingual and bicultural individuals. This became clearer as we kept going deeper in our analysis.

Grosjean (2015) states there are several factors that characterize bicultural individuals, such as taking part to a certain degree a lifestyle of two or more cultures. They also adapt in part aspects of their lives such as attitude, language, values, behavior and others to these cultures. Bicultural people also tend to blend all these aspects mentioned of their cultures to a degree where it becomes hard to know the origins of these specific characteristics. With this, we can add that the outcome of the cultural assimilation process is the acquisition of the status of biculturalism.

The Meaning Beyond the Words

Relationships do not always feel the gap

One of the most important things when we meet a new culture is being able to feel familiarity within the new environment, perceiving that not everything that surrounds us is unknown and that we can deal with the constant nostalgia by means of this familiarity. But when we realize that there are big gaps between our culture and the host culture, it is possible to come across certain cultural practices which can cause a long range of reactions particular to each person, examples are misunderstandings, curiosity or a first strong first impression.

Over time we come to accept these practices and maybe even take part in such, however this does not mean we will be fully accepted as part of this new culture. Even though assimilation means the acquisition of cultural aspects from the host culture by migrants, it is a fact that alongside the continued coexistence were not enough factors for the equal incorporation to become members of a society (Solé et al, 2002).

Speaking of first impressions, festivities can cause quite the commotion, it is a time for celebration and unification. For foreigners, these experiences represent a contact with the host culture that could shape their view towards their new cultural context.

Angelou described,

...las festividades, esas cosas son diferentes. Por ejemplo, en año nuevo los japoneses acostumbran a ir a los templos a recibir el año nuevo, nosotros el año nuevo lo dedicamos a estar con la familia o así las personas allegadas a estar con la familia, a dar el feliz año, ellos se van al templo a recibir el año nuevo, piden deseos y todas esas cosas. Las cosas para nosotros que son como los aniversarios del pueblo de la ciudad, cosas así que se hacen no, las ferias y eso, aquí son como diferentes, son como en los templos, se celebran ya sea el recibimiento de primavera o por algo así, se celebran son más como en carrozas ... Cuando fue lo del terremoto por ejemplo o cuando ocurre una catástrofe la cultura es muy ordenada, vas al supermercado y por familia puedes llevar solamente un tarro de leche o por persona un tarro de agua o un paquete de pan. Todo

es muy controlado para que todos tengan la misma oportunidad de llevar lo mismo...

Angelou made a cultural contrast as she did a comparison of celebrations and their meanings. In Colombia, celebration means spending time with your loved ones at one of their houses and give them our best wishes. Meanwhile in Japan the whole community comes together as they participate in their festivities into designated areas like temples. The organization and control they have and manage to keep even in hard times is what caused Angelou a positive reaction regarding Japanese society.

Perhaps for others the simple daily activities are the things that make an everlasting impression. Our daily activities are crucial as they guide us through meaningful details of life. Earhart affirmed,

... por ejemplo, uno, aquí se lava la ropa de tal manera (laundry room) (...) porque uno allá lava y tienes que extender para el sol secar ¿verdad? o con el aire (...). Por ejemplo, el agua aquí es congelada, en San Pedro es fría pero acá es congelada, entonces aquí también tú llegas y te tienen que enseñar que hay dos llaves, una de agua fría y otra de agua caliente...

Crucial as they are, our daily activities bring us closer to what we left behind, due to wanting to fill that void regarding our old home. Earhart had to reconstruct this from zero as she had to adapt to her new everyday life, creating a new daily routine. Gonzales & Smith (1998) affirmed that everyday life allows us to understand social functioning topics in specific plots, specifications we all go through with consistency be it a lot or little.

Interpersonal relationships are part of everyday life in which a person develops or connects with its context. For a migrant, these relations have to be created once again from scratch, learning how to connect to their new environment as they coexist with not only the culture but also the members of it. Phileas listed some meaningful examples,

Por ejemplo, la representación de los números con las manos, por señas. También el modo de hablar de las personas. Acá a los mayores de 40 años se les dice tíos o tías, y los que son mayores de 60 o 70 años, se les llama abuelos así no los conozcas, es normal. Las relaciones sociales son parecidas, cuando por ejemplo mi hermano me presenta sus amigos, ellos me reciben también como su amigo, lo integran a uno fácilmente. Otra cosa, por ejemplo, las peleas; allá (Colombia) es un peligro, pelean con cuchillos uno contra uno; acá (China) no hay cuchillos (para pelear) pero no pelean uno contra uno, 50 contra 1 o 2 y así, pelean en grupo...

Phileas had to relearn for the most part how to communicate with others, how to express in a proper manner and basically how things work in China and go along with it. For example, the proper way to address someone, depending on their age Phileas must address them with their respective title, this aspect being more flexible in Colombia.

Similarities with Colombia are also shown to Phileas in China, how they handle social relations, giving him an ease and not having to relearn everything.

Phileas also makes the comparison when it comes to fights, highlighting the importance of learning said aspect as he would have to probably get involved when the

time comes as Chinese culture dictates. These are unspoken and unwritten social rules that people must follow to fit in, a key factor that one must learn when coming in contact with a foreign society.

Food and taste make part of culture as part of the essence and characteristic of a place and can even be recognized by a dish. In this case Lodbrok felt that it was crucial and worth mentioning his own experience in his cultural assimilation process concerning Colombian gastronomy.

Sufría en un principio, “sufría” pues no era un sufrimiento inaguantable pero sentía la falta de variedad en la comida, al principio no entendía por qué (...) comer tanto arroz, el arroz lo tenía que revolver con Fruco para podérmelo comer (...) pues ahora a mí me encanta el arroz y aquí lo preparan, no sé aquí saben preparar el arroz, o sea, uno aquí puede comer el arroz blanco solito tiene sabor, y me encanta el arroz, pero al principio ¡agh! siempre lo mismo, pollo, pollo, pollo” (risas) carne de res, pollo, carne de res, pollo y ¿dónde está el pato? ¿dónde está el cordero?” una cantidad de cosas no, porque pues siempre comen lo mismo. Sentía una falta de variedad que ya no siento. A mí me encanta, me encanta, me encanta la comida criolla o sea, a mí si me van a invitar a almorzar no me lleven al restaurante gourmet no sé qué llévenme a la galería que ahí es donde mejor se come y pues que yo sé que voy a encontrar lo que voy a comer con gusto-me encanta la comida criolla ...”

Food brings us closer to home, makes us feel comfort and full not only in the physical aspect, but spiritually as well. It brings up memories and familiar sensations that add up to the fact the food is an experience in itself. Lodbrok struggled his first months in Colombia as the diet here is rather biased, predictable, unlike France where variety is part of their everyday life. It was a funny change of events that Lodbrok fell in love with Colombian food and now enjoys it so much that he insisted on being invited to enjoy such cuisine.

Social relations are important to build connections, making us capable of managing the different situations in our daily life. Aronnax described,

On a une pratique culturelle très différente de la France, et surtout dans le social en fait. On est beaucoup trop sociables si tu veux chez nous. moi je viens en France ici, si je vois quelqu'un en train de passer là et nous dire, viens, tu vas manger à la maison à midi ou à 18h. Nous, chez nous, on a par exemple, là où je suis né, grandi et tout, y a tout le temps des inconnus, qui on connaît pas, que mes parents connaissent pas, tu les appelles, tu viens, tu vas manger, à midi où le soir, ça tous les jours en fait, et ici en France c'est pas pareille, là, chacun pour soi, pour ta famille en fait, si c'est pas ta famille, il y a personne qui te regarde en fait si tu veux ...

Retaking Marin and VanOss (1991), collective societies such as Latinos tend to be more open community-wise, creating extensive family members as they share together

every single day activities, they are neighborly and actively participate in each other's lives, sharing loyalty and solidarity in every single possible aspect.

Aronnax mentioned it was common in his place of birth the solidarity and companionship between the people of his community, their beliefs leading their lives as all are equal in each other's eyes, it is normal to share what you have and raise your children in a tight unity. The contrary happened for Aronnax in France as he told us it was strange how individualistic and solitary life seems in this country, people only care about themselves or their close family.

It is exposed that social relations influence views and therefore shaped the cultural assimilation process on migrants, key events allow to mold someone's perspective and make the comparison of their past cultural context within the new as they still nowadays continue to coexist their host country, adapting, interpreting and adopting what they believe they need or desire to learn for themselves, not only to fit in, but also to become a better version of themselves.

Into the wilderness of a storm

The sentiment of fitting into the place you have arrived is one of the most important factors in the assimilation process, trying to adjust to a new place where people appear to not accept the effort a migrant does to become one with their surroundings. These scenarios can represent a recoil in a person going through their adaptation process in a new society. Some people can be remarkably upset, other people appear to not care, and others just try to deal with it.

Pasabe, Lobina and Páez (2004) referenced the importance of the attitude of the host society. A positive attitude towards migrants by locals would favor a positive orientation of the migrants towards their host society and their wishes to integrate and learn about the local culture. Some host societies can be more radical than others in their approach and acceptance to migrants, making it harder for migrants to incorporate in daily activities or create a good relationship with the new context they live in.

... en tanto trabajos como en lugares así públicos sí, hay japoneses que te miran, así como bicho raro o te miran raro, o se quitan de tu lado, pero yo realmente como que ya no sé qué, como que me da igual no me interesa, igual hay mucho extranjero aquí y tienen que acostumbrarse de que estamos en todas partes y no nunca he tenido mucho problema ...en un trabajo que yo hacía que era atendiendo personas y llegaban a veces no, un poco groseros a decir “ah tu eres extranjera, ¿por qué no te regresas a tu país?” no sé qué. Me chocaba al principio, pero mi jefa me decía “tranquila, no hagas caso”, aprendí a controlar eso y ya después cuando llegaba esa persona a decir “ah tu eres extranjera, ¿por qué no te regresas a tu país!?” yo le respondía “este es un local de extranjeras, ¿para qué vienes?...”

Being foreign in public spaces can be uncomfortable for someone, there are people who will probably not accept them there and may never see them as equal. Terrén (2001) clearly states that as racial differences are a product of geographic and moral isolation, civilization is a product of contact and communication. Society is born thanks

to its people and it depends on their own upbringing the views the whole population share as a norm. In Japan's case their culture is not mostly accepting of foreign individuals living among them. Perhaps someone may not suffer a case of discrimination, however they could also witness one that can stick with them in a memory they can perfectly recall like in Phileas case.

yo solía salir con un amigo que es de Estados Unidos, él no es nada chino, entonces a él en el subway, el tren, cuando tocaba pasar por un escáner, y así, acá nos piden un código QR para que nos dejen pasar, eso indica que estamos bien, que no tenemos nada; entonces, a él se la montaron porque no habla el idioma de acá sino que sólo habla inglés y español, se la montaron porque no tenía el código; a él le dijeron que tenía que estar en cuarentena unos 20 días más o menos; lo trataron como tratan a un indigente en Colombia ...

The comparison Phileas made by mentioning that this American was treated the same way as a homeless person in Colombia gave us a full picture of how that situation went. More so people would expect better behavior by cops or at least a better way to handle the situation as they are authority figures and people seek their aid in times of need.

Rejection can be hard to handle, especially if it is constant in your everyday life, the little things that we take for granted actually matter once you start to notice a change.

It does not make it easier even if they are small or people believe they are discreet about it. Aronnax told us,

Quand tu montes dans le bus. Moi, je connais des situations un petit peu discriminatoires, où quand je monte par exemple dans le bus, ils voient que je suis black, quand je viens m'asseoir à côté de quelqu'un qui est blanc surtout les filles qui sont blanches, quand tu t'assois à côté, des filles... elle va se lever, et aller s'asseoir sur une notre place. Voilà, moi personnellement, ça ne m'intéresse pas, je m'en fous en fait ...

To Aronnax, discrimination is a constant in his daily life, an endless scenario where his coping mechanism is to rather ignore than engage each time this happens. The specific circumstance of taking a bus represents a necessity that in this case can turn into an upsetting experience, the possibility to witness someone who takes distance due to someone's skin color or accent.

Ideas of racial purity are a problem among society as they tend to view a person for not who they are but for their looks. Terrén (2001) explains it better as he refers that ethnic purity comes as a consequence of geographic isolation of premodern societies or moral isolation of specific modern groups and not as a result of a supposed logic of ethnicity or a self-cultural dynamic. It is non-natural response and follows no rational logic pertinent to the organization of a society, it is an obsolete history of a supposed racial purity problematic.

In many ways, everything changes

The before and after of any event is important and helps to reflect on past and present experiences. Thought our participants' experiences before and after the migration we could perceive the cultural assimilation process they had gone through and therefore obtained in-depth information about the studied phenomenon.

Psychologically, there is no commonly agreed definition of biculturalism. Loosely speaking, bicultural individuals are those whose self-label (e.g. 'I am bicultural') or group self-categorization (e.g. 'I am American' and 'I am Chinese'; 'I am Chinese American') reflects their cultural dualism. More strictly defined, bicultural individuals are those who have been exposed to and have internalized two cultures (Benet-Martínez, Leu, Lee, and Morris, (2002). As our participants can now be considered bicultural individuals and we also have some who possess these dualisms since birth, we believe that biculturalism is crucial for the understanding of how much our participants' perceptions have been transformed.

The fact recognizing their own change or their belonging to two different roots might be an indication that the cultural assimilation process was partially successful. In some occasions we can have opinions of a certain place, we can create a picture of what we will face in the future but the reality is that we never can fully picture a place unless we've been there, even with the recent technological advances. Angelou recalled about her first impressions of Japan,

Realmente en ese entonces no me imaginaba cómo era Japón, no sabía exactamente ... De pronto sí como que me sorprendió lo que es la cultura,

el civismo, la gente es muy limpia, muy ordenada, me gustó la seguridad a pesar que obviamente los japoneses son loquitos y hacen cosas en contra de la gente pero gracias a Dios que no me han tocado nada de esas situaciones...

Nonetheless Angelou's identity is half-Japanese, it was not possible to picture Japan accurately enough, it was like throwing someone in the unknown expecting to find something remotely similar to what Angelou had imagined. Still, it turned out well as she found Japan fascinating and came to cherish it enough to organize her life there even with its flaws. Some adjustments can be a little radical where maybe your own identity could be put aside in between the host culture exploration, it could be named a detached feeling or simply an extreme passion for the new emerging identity. Lodbrok affirmed,

Sí hay una percepción diferente, uno toma distancia con el país de origen, yo tomé mi distancia con el mío. No es que lo quiera menos, no es que me sienta menos francés-tal vez sí pero me siento francés de otra forma, ya no me siento tan de allá (...) No sé si podría volver a vivir allá del todo obviamente sí, si tuviera que volver a vivir allá del todo podría, obviamente me faltaría algo y tal vez es esto que hace que cuando ahora estoy allá, estoy bien, estoy contento pero miro las cosas como con distancia ...

Lodbrok changed a lot of his perceptions to the point of distancing himself from his place of birth, expressing there was now a gap between them. It is not something Lodbrok sought, he does not feel he left his identity as a French although something did

change and does not feel the same or at least how it used to be. That something creates doubt within Lodbrok, he is not unhappy, just things are different now.

Stereotypes are strong and create illusions or perceptions of a country or a culture, giving a mistaken reality where we can easily fool ourselves.

a uno le dicen que en China uno encuentra ratones, gatos o perros que se los come la gente, pero hasta el momento eso no lo he visto. Creo que eso pasa en los pueblos, pero en las grandes ciudades no se ve nada de eso, como perros asados. De resto, creo que no recuerdo nada más...

Gamarnik (2009) said that stereotypes present beliefs in an unconscious matter and are shared by society, hiding prejudice to the point of becoming “logical” and “normal” ways for others to perceive foreign people and its culture, leading to talking and making jokes. They become natural and suggest what a determined population is and how they must be. In everyday life these are used and rarely people question them, patronizing such comments. In Phileas' case, a common stereotype is that Chinese will eat almost anything that moves, a fact that is not entirely true.

Propaganda such as advertisements that come in many shapes and sizes (audio, visuals and others) also contribute to the portrayal of stereotypes and help them propagate faster. People take this as truth and end up with individuals creating false expectations.

Avant que je ne viens en France, j'écoutais à la télé à la radio et tout, la France est un pays beau, riche, s'il y avait pas la discrimination, et tout était facil ... Et de coup, quand je suis arrivé, j'ai totalement vu la différence, là il faut beaucoup plus de travailler et être beaucoup plus à

l'école et c'était plus dur... chacun pour soi, chacun pour soi, il faut vraiment travailler pour avoir quelque chose quoi en fait ...

After hearing on the radio and TV the marvelous things about France, Aronnax found himself disappointed with France's actual reality once he arrived (this period of time being the first months of his assimilation process). He found a place that offered better conditions from his place of origin but was not similar at all to the scenario they assured him France was.

As we conclude with this part, we notice the effects stereotypes had on our participants' perceptions before the journey and afterwards. As mentioned by Gamarnik (2009) about this subject, knowing the reason of what and why a stereotype is and can be successful does not explain how they appear and their use in society.

This social media stereotype relationship allows a connection between an image and conception that molds and if it's accurate with reality. The impact stereotypes have on society are powerful especially when referring to groups that we have no knowledge as individuals (example seen in Aronnax's interview as he pictured France with what TV and radio promoted).

To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture (Fanon, F.)

The difference between cultures is an aspect that can impact a migrant's impression of their new environment, there are connections that can be difficult and in most cases it is hard to learn or accept all these cultural variables. It can be more difficult when we cannot even speak to communicate with the people belonging to such foreign

culture. For the assimilation cultural process is necessary to experience a positive interaction with the host culture, it is here where the native language of the host country becomes a tool to succeed on a higher level of a complex adaptation process such as the cultural assimilation one.

About learning an L2, Zhanga and Harzing (2016) said “learning a new language during adulthood, and especially in conjunction with work, can be challenging.” (p. 782), showing us the challenge that represents for a migrant to be surrounded by a place where they cannot communicate and this can also lead to several uncomfortable situations that can be easily misinterpreted by locals, a scenario that our participant had to face once they began a new life in their host country.

People can easily misunderstand you if you try to constantly avoid or cut interaction with others, more so if they do not know that the reason behind such behavior is your low level of the host language. Angelou described such situations,

Si trabaja entre japoneses obviamente que te ayuda mucho porque puedes interactuar más, puedes y quieres ser como más amable o ayudar a las personas, pero como antes no tenía el idioma entonces como que no podía, no sabía cómo hacerlo, entonces tu pasabas como de odiosa o esta chica no ayuda, pero ahora con lo que tengo si me ayuda mucho como a lo básico, como si necesita ayuda alguien o poder hacer otra cosa, si ayuda bastante ...

Here Angelou expressed her desire for interaction but as she could not speak the L2 properly enough to be understood she distanced herself unwillingly, as she continued

to learn her working environment changed for the better. In Zhanga & Harzing (2016) research evidence shows how speaking the host language of a country created and nurtured closer bonds between co-workers that lead to trust, a key aspect in any business, bonds that are crucial for any migrant trying to adapt to a foreign society.

In other stricter working environments, it is required to follow direct orders where perhaps an L2 is the only allowed spoken language in your workplace.

mi empleadora me dijo: “aquí tiene que hablar puro inglés, usted aquí se olvida del español, no quiero oír ni por teléfono que hable español, mejor que ni la llamen” me dice ... yo empecé y eso me sirvió mucho a mí y ya empecé a hablarle, no como ellos, claro que no, pero ella ya me entendía, ella ya me escribía, ella me dejaba notas en inglés y yo tenía que saber...

Earhart’s case is a perfect example of how a rigorous employer made her learn an L2 to a point where she could be understood as Earhart’s employer also put effort in teaching in her own way, going the extra mile to aid Earhart in her learning process, demonstrating how a positive coexistence with a local serve as a step closer to the possibility of a successful cultural assimilation process.

We mentioned before that the feeling of belonging to a culture and the existing contradiction of not is awful, in Phileas case this came to be as not knowing an L2 he was supposed to know made it harder in his adaptation process.

Al inicio me decían “¿usted teniendo la cara de un chino, no puede hablar cantonés ni chino? Usted me está mintiendo”, y así duré como dos meses; me afectaba un poco porque yo con mi rostro y estando acá, sentía que sí

*o sí debía aprender ese idioma, me tocó ponerme a estudiar mucho ...
Después de 2-3 meses que ya fui aprendiendo el idioma ... En general,
haberlo aprendido mejora mucho las cosas. Aunque hay traducciones que
uno no puede hacer literalmente ...*

Phileas had to work hard and began learning the L2 as he told himself that failure in doing so was not an option and perseverance gave results, he now has learned and expressed how it improved his current situation. Phileas also seems to have a better understanding of how languages work as he knows a fact that sometimes the literal translation is impossible, demonstrating a good comprehension capacity of both languages (his native one and the L2).

In such a manner we expose an L2 as a host language thus developed in the host country by our participants, needless and at the same time not to say, we support the proposal of Soto and Madkouri (2005). The studies concerning the acquisition of an L2 in migrant populations manifest that an L2 constitutes an individual and multicasé process where multiple aspects (social relations gap, acculturation level and self-learning regarding an L2) occur, although in all cases does not present the same results as they are unique to each individual.

Conclusions. Final Reflections on Cultural Assimilation

Throughout this research, we have gotten closer to the process a person has to go through when they decide to become a migrant. Not only have we shown their experiences living in a foreign country, but also, we have inquired about their reasons, motives, and feelings related to their decision behind migrating. In sum, we have described what our participants underwent as they adapted to their host countries and ultimately how everything ended for them and adjusted to the circumstances of their new present lives. Our ultimate purpose by doing this, was explaining the process called Cultural Assimilation.

We wanted to expose Cultural Assimilation as part of a human process that people live through as they decide to move from one place to another that does not possess enough similarities to be considered an extension of their previous culture. Understanding Cultural Assimilation reveals a human side that a lot of the time is ignored even if it becomes crucial and influences enough the cultural studies of human interactions.

Consequently, Cultural Assimilation went from signifying salvation or hope to meanings like the thrill of adventure, the need for individuality and independence, or the discovery of one's self which also lead to the birth of a new identity as both their old and new acquired cultural traits emerge, creating a new one, as it was stated by the participants.

We have divided the analysis of Cultural Assimilation into segments, these created with the purpose of reflecting on the process of Cultural Assimilation, we guided ourselves based on the objectives and framework, definitions that can expose the Cultural Assimilation Process.

Migration and Culture: Its Relation with Cultural Assimilation

Within the life stories of our participants, we noticed that their Cultural Assimilation process began even before traveling, from the very decision of leaving the country to each participant selecting their destinations. From the moment they chose a place based on reasons like things they saw or heard from others to the desire to know more about a culture considered important, a bond is created between wish and reality that will become important in the future.

When the decision is made, the preparations for the journey begin as soon as people undergo legal formalities and a date for departure is selected. Future migrants might bear feelings of anxiety, fear, sadness, or excitement that bottle up inside and become stronger as they say their goodbyes to their loved ones.

Once arrived at a new country, culture is one of the most influential aspects since cultural identity clashes with the host culture. It is here where cultural perceptions (migrant and locals) impact the assimilation of the cultural differences they are faced with.

Cultural Assimilation begins when someone becomes a migrant and ends based on how they face and are faced with cultural perceptions and differences, its final stage when such a person becomes a bilingual and bicultural individual.

Cultural Contact: Cultural Integration & Cultural Shock - Cultural Assimilation

Stages

Coexisting within the host country presents different challenges: interactions with others, the development of personal and non-personal relationships, the understanding of others and ourselves. When an individual settles in a place that only partially resembles its own cultural context, not only we should analyze how this person adapts in the cultural context but we also have to inquire how their identity is affected by the context including their personal relationships, and their emotional reactions towards social contact.

In other words, how culture produces an effect on the migrant and their way of creating amends with the cultural context that surrounds them should be highlighted and studied. A host country will offer an alternative reality founded on how life should be lived and understood. Standards vary from country to country in ways people sometimes may only imagine. For example, adjusting to such change respecting a daily routine creates stress in anyone, as they must relearn essential things such as eating and sleeping habits, or readjusting a schedule.

The analysis of these situations (daily activities, personal and non-personal relationships and social standards) represents the reasons behind the fact of whether or not someone has adapted successfully into a society. As a result, from a cultural contact (without taking into account whether it is positive or negative) we would have a scenario

where it could produce an effective cultural integration, this coming afterwards suffering from the usual shock that comes when facing such cultural varieties in a host country.

When we speak effectiveness regarding cultural integration, keep in mind we refer to the results from our participants which were two: A complete and partial integration into the host culture. When we mention a complete cultural integration we talk about people like Lodbrok, a person that is able to speak and think in the L2, who also has no problems when it comes to interacting with others at all social levels and knows how to handle common daily scenarios, a man who became one with the host culture, to the point where he removes the status of host as he feels that now this culture also belongs to him, a fact he manifested as he plead he now has a “Colombian Identity” alongside his other one.

The other scenario we have is Earhart’s, a woman that partially adapted to a foreign society. Earhart only has a limited ability when it comes to the L2, only using it in workplaces most of the time. She also has problems regarding social interaction as she can only fully express and be herself in specific situations and specific people with whom she shares cultural similarities and speak a variant of the same language that Earharts speaks (in this case Spanish) and not the host’s country language (English). However she knows mostly how to handle common daily scenarios of her host country, she became partially part of the foreign culture.

Even if she expressed she feels one with the host culture, our analysis showed otherwise. Upon reflection we put Earhart in a partial level of bilingualism and biculturalism, not making it less relevant, just demonstrating that there are cases like hers

and they should still be kept in high regard as they still were able to take a risk and, in many ways, succeeded.

L2 as a Host Language & Bilingualism

Another aspect to take into account in relation to the Cultural Assimilation Process is language. The acquisition of a second language is the result of a reciprocal relationship between someone's cultural contact and a host country where the need to learn an L2 is essential in order to thrive in society.

In cases such as Angelou, Earhart and Phileas, their L2 is limited to certain areas such as work and studies. In these places, they practice their L2 to a point they are understood, therefore facilitating their working and academic environments. Learning an L2 takes time depending on each individual and different aspects that influence their learning process. What we see in these three cases is that they prioritized their learning process based on economic needs and only later started to apply it in other personal aspects of their lives. Somehow, this prioritization has made the process smoother for them as they do not feel rushed to learn their L2 and therefore can acquire it at their own pace.

We also have the cases of Aronnax and Lodbrok who have acquired an L2 to a level of almost perfect bilingualism. They are able to think and express themselves in the host language with little to no problem and therefore have used it in all life aspects. Making use of these languages to camouflage and/or become part of the host society almost entirely, as it is impossible to fully belong to such unless you are born within the

society and therefore you would not have the foreign status. A detail all participants seem to acknowledge throughout our interviews.

Hence, we appreciate how the L2 as a host language becomes part of the Cultural Assimilation process allowing a person to relate with the new cultural context and its society on a more significant and personal level, improving social relationships and giving individual independence and satisfaction while also easing the feeling of being foreign. As a result, we perceived a reconstruction of our participants, leading to individuals that thrive in their actual cultural and social context, providing the feeling of partial ownership towards both culture and society.

Cultural Identity: Interculturalism & Bicultural - Cultural Assimilation Outcomes

When it comes to Cultural Identity, we speak of one of the most influential aspects by the Cultural Assimilation Process due to the changes this produces in people. These changes represent a break from the routine, and comfort zone. Everything that made us and everything that was once our old self goes through a transformation led by adaptation and assimilation of the new people and environment. Cultural Assimilation might be considered as a molding process where the old perceptions clash with the new ones, thus resulting in biculturalism.

In this way, interculturalism, considered as an equal interaction of diverse cultures within a shared place, is crucial and plays a role in each individual's Cultural Assimilation process. It allows not only a better understanding of the inhabited place but also helps in the adaptation process to the new environment while providing comfort as

there is a possibility of familiarity for foreigners, plus reducing the cultural barriers that could establish between natives and foreigners.

Proceeding with the interviews we came across two types of biculturalism. One of them was acquired after being a certain amount of time in the host country, and the other from birth. The first case applies to our participants Aronnax, Lodbrok, and Earhart. They had no previous relationship with their host countries until arrival, they were just a possibility, among others.

On the contrary, Angelou and Phileas were born in a context where they were constantly reminded and taught about their second culture by their families before traveling, so their destinations were not just a possibility but a step they had to take at some point of their lives.

These aspects are related to the Cultural Assimilation Process since they were a step forward in the right direction to their adaptation to the host country, they avoided misconceptions and unnecessary stereotypes that could potentially influence their concept regarding said countries and therefore their cultures.

At the end of our interviews and what so far our participants have lived, we can assure all of them have become bicultural individuals with each possessing their own level of acquired culture and not tainted but emerged with their old cultural identity, giving birth to a new one. As a consequence, we have noticed a reconstruction of one's self creating a person that is compatible with its new cultural and social context that also feels in part as their own.

In this matter we demonstrate how the Cultural Assimilation Process was lived by our participants, each stage and aspect explained and exposed based upon on the reflection after our interviews' analysis.

Recommendations

- Be mindful of the importance of the cultural variety our university possesses, students and other staff who come to this place of learning and research carry their own backgrounds full of cultural diversity within their own identities.
- Not only limited to help ease students into the university lifestyle but also give importance to Colombia's different cultures as well since we mostly focus on foreign countries leaving in the dark what our own has to offer.
- We should all keep in mind aspects related to Cultural Assimilation that impact in the learning process and how much it influences students when it comes to their mental health as well, it adds to the extra weight of starting a new chapter in their life.
- The university should provide aid services regarding psychological matters as students and other staff members that come from different places of Colombia and even from other countries go through the cultural assimilation process as well. This can also apply to students who are considering traveling abroad as they will also go through such a process, giving them insight on what they may experience and could also provide them with support and show how it is a natural thing to go through.
- Give a chance to the qualitative methods and reflection on subjects outside teaching or pedagogy. Throughout our whole learning process we learn and interact with other cultures in order to acquire their languages in a way that feels as natural as possible. With this methodology, we did not treat our participants as data but rather people and gave highlights for future readers of who they are as individuals from their experiences,

perceptions, and personalities. Those features molded and fostered reflections that we did not even consider could shape our research for the better and that went beyond plain numbers or statistics.

- To consider the option to integrate topics related to Cultural Assimilation and its challenges within the program through areas such as Intercultural Communication or cross-curricular projects.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Consent Formats

Consentimiento

Proyecto Understanding Cultural Assimilation Process of a Migrant's Experiences

Yo Nora Sofia Hurtado Yule, con el número de cédula 34593813 acepto participar voluntariamente en esta investigación, conducida por Daniel Andres Moreno y Flora María Torres. He sido informado (a) sobre el objetivo del estudio.

Me han indicado también que tendré que responder preguntas en una entrevista a profundidad, lo cual tomará aproximadamente 40 minutos.

Reconozco que la información que yo provea en el curso de esta investigación es estrictamente confidencial y no será usada para ningún otro propósito fuera de los de este estudio sin mi consentimiento. He sido informado de que puedo hacer preguntas sobre el proyecto en cualquier momento y que puedo retirarme del mismo cuando así lo decida, sin que esto acarree perjuicio alguno para mi persona. De tener preguntas sobre mi participación en este estudio, puedo contactar al investigador al teléfono 3206090813.

Entiendo que una copia de esta ficha de consentimiento me será entregada, y que puedo pedir información sobre los resultados de este estudio cuando éste haya concluido. Para esto, puedo contactar al investigador a los teléfonos antes mencionados.


Consent for participation in a research interview

Understanding cultural assimilation process from Migrants experiences.

I agree to participate in a research project led by Daniel Andres Moreno Ospina and Flora María Torres, students of "Universidad del Cauca, sede regionalización". The purpose of this document is to specify the terms of my participation in this project through being interviewed.

1. I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project have been explained to me and is clear.
2. My participation as an interviewee is voluntary.
3. I have also been instructed that I will have to answer questions in an in-depth interview, which will take approximately 40 minutes.
4. I acknowledge that the information I provide in the course of this research is strictly confidential and will not be used for any purpose other than that of this study without my consent.
5. I have been informed that I can ask questions about the project at any time and that I can withdraw from it when I so choose, without this causing any harm to me.

If I have questions about my participation in this study, I can contact the researcher at 3206090813. I understand that a copy of this consent form will be provided to me, and that I can request information on the results of this study when it is completed. For this, I can contact the researcher at the aforementioned phones.



Signature: Dialoo Alpha Boubacar

Phone number: 0761457269

Mail: dialloalphaboubacar24@gmail.com

yo Shigeko Yamanaka Pareja Acepto Participar voluntariamente en esta investigación, conducida por Daniel Andres Moreno y Lora Mariatorres. He sido informada sobre el objetivo del estudio.

Me han indicado también que tendré que responder preguntas en una entrevista a profundidad, a lo cual tomara aproximadamente 40 minutos.

Reconozco que la información que yo provea en el curso de esta investigación es estrictamente confidencial y no será usada para ningún otro propósito fuera de los de este estudio sin mi consentimiento. He sido informada de que puedo hacer preguntas sobre el proyecto en cualquier momento y que puedo retirarme del mismo cuando así lo decida, sin que acarree perjuicio alguno para mi persona.

De tener preguntas sobre mi participación en este estudio puedo contactar al investigador al ~~(#)~~ teléfono 320-609-0813.

Entiendo que una copia de esta ficha de consentimiento me será entregada, y que puedo pedir información sobre los resultados de este estudio cuando éste haya concluido para esto puedo contactar al investigador a los teléfonos antes mencionados.

Shigeko Yamanaka Pareja

080-6920-4831

shigeko123@gmail.com

Yo Acepto participar voluntariamente en esta investigación, conducida por Daniel Andres Moreno y Flora María Torres. He sido informado (a) sobre el objetivo del estudio, para la Universidad del Cauca Regionalización Santander de Quilichao Cauca.

Me han indicado también que tendré que responder preguntas en una entrevista a profundidad, lo cual tomará aproximadamente 40 minutos. Reconozco que la información que yo provea en el curso de esta investigación es estrictamente confidencial y no será usada para ningún otro propósito fuera de los de este estudio sin mi consentimiento. He sido informado de que puedo hacer preguntas sobre el proyecto en cualquier momento y que puedo retirarme del mismo cuando así lo decida, sin que esto acarree perjuicio alguno para mi persona. De tener preguntas sobre mi participación en este estudio, puedo contactar al investigador al teléfono 3206090813.

Entiendo que una copia de esta ficha de consentimiento me será entregada, y que puedo pedir información sobre los resultados de este estudio cuando éste haya concluido. Para esto, puedo contactar al investigador a los teléfonos antes mencionados.

Bertrand Sittgrand
Cel. 314.681.21.58

Yo, Jaime Tan Fu Li Kuang, CC 1006341528, acepto participar voluntariamente en esta investigación conducida por Daniel Andrés Moreno y Flora María Torres. He sido informado sobre el objetivo del estudio.

Me han indicado también que tendré que responder preguntas en una entrevista a profundidad, la cual tomará aproximadamente 40 minutos.

Reconozco que la información que yo provea en el curso de esta investigación es estrictamente confidencial y no será usada para ningún otro propósito fuera de los de este estudio sin mi consentimiento. He sido informado de que puedo hacer preguntas sobre el proyecto en cualquier momento y que puedo retirarme del mismo cuando así lo decida, sin que esto acarree perjuicio alguno para mi persona. De tener preguntas sobre mi participación en este estudio, puedo contactar al investigador al teléfono 3206090813.

Entiendo que una copia de esta ficha de consentimiento me será entregada, y que puedo pedir información sobre los resultados de este estudio cuando éste haya concluido. Para esto, puedo contactar al investigador al teléfono antes mencionado.

Pueden contactarme a la dirección jaimetankfu@gmail.com o al teléfono +861852090117.

Appendix 2: Beta Interview Transcriptions

Beta interview 1

The interviewer starts the meeting by greeting and giving a little explanation about the way of

Interview is going to be. The participant agreed, and she is dispose to answer the questions. (The interviewer said her that she can tell everything in a kind of summary way. The participant asked to select what questions she wanted to answer due to she has to come back to work.

The interviewer: When did you decide to leave your original country?

The participant: I came to Colombia in 2010. It was ten years exactly.

The interviewer: Why did you decide to leave your original country?

The participant: Because, I chose to come here, because my husband is from Colombia and I wanted to live here.

The interviewer: What are those things that you consider most difficult to face from the new culture?

Participant: The most difficult... it is “los tramites”, in especial “tramites de salud” I don’t like to do “tramites” it is too much disturbing.

Interviewer: Do you consider that you faced some problems the first months? What kind of problems?

Participant: No, because I knew well Colombia, I came in vacations. I knew how it works. I did not know “el Cauca” and I discover the place. However, there was no problem.

Interviewer: How often do you travel to your country of origin? What feelings do you have when returning? Do you notice any particular changes in your own considerations of you?

Participant: When I have the opportunity, change and the money, I go France. I think that I am critic of my country; it is the same thing. It gives me the chance to understand Colombia, the fact to live here; I understand several things, the mortality, how people live, etc. Moreover, I changed my behavior living here. I learned too much things.

Interviewer: Have you ever lived situations that you consider discriminatory? Describe

Participant: No, we have the chance of being well received, something that is not the case of my country in France,

Interviewer: How have your perceptions/opinions about your host country have changed before and after your traveling?

Participant: Yes of course, it is normal. We learned many things when we live in this country, the way that people live, and how everything works, the life here, how the young people think, and little by little, we learn.

The interview ends and the participant ask something about the project.

Beta interview II

¿Cuándo decidiste dejar tu país de origen?

“En el 86, en el 1986”

¿Por qué decidiste dejar tu país?

“En primer lugar, mi trabajo ya no era igual, ya había muchos recortes donde trabajaba. Y en segundo lugar, porque el novio que tenía para ese momento, que hoy en día es mi esposo, quería que ya nos reuniéramos, y entonces por eso vine para acá”

-Bueno ya que contaste esa pregunta, de pronto contesta la siguiente, pero pues igual te la voy a hacer-

¿Cuáles fueron los motivos para elegir ese país?

“Porque él vive acá, vivía acá”

-¿Solo ese? ¿No hay otra razón?-

“Sí, si porque él estaba acá, ¿para donde nos íbamos a ir?”

(Risas)

¿Podría describir cronológicamente los eventos anteriores a su viaje?

“Bueno, yo fui, me presente al consulado de estados unidos en Bogotá, me presenté por dos ocasiones. Como eso es lo que ustedes quieren saber, ¿verdad?”

-Si-

“Me presente por dos ocasiones tratando de buscar una visa, pero las dos ocasiones me la negaron. Entonces pues los planes con quien es hoy en día mi esposo seguían en pie, de que yo viniera para acá, entonces conseguimos para ese momento una compañía, digámoslo así, una oficina que con ellos mi suegra había viajado para acá y también mi cuñado. Entonces hicimos esa conexión y entonces vine para acá como si anduviéramos en una forma de excursión, pero la excursión era... Todo iba bien, hasta con visa con todo desde, saliendo de Colombia, hasta entrando a ecuador, luego llegando de ecuador México. Y de México ya teníamos que cruzar pues como usualmente lo hacen, cruzar caminando la frontera para llegar acá a esta nación”

¿Puedes describir tus sentimientos antes de viajar? ¿Alguna anécdota en particular que recuerdes?

“Pues que le cuento, los sentimientos son un poquito encontrados, pero yo estaba decidida a venir para acá, en ningún momento tenía como que, no me voy, no. Es la

nostalgia de que pues uno se va y que pues que el que quedan, en este caso, mis hermanos, mis sobrinos, algunos todavía no habían nacido. Pero pues, eso, la nostalgia de que uno sale y que pues es una aventura realmente la que uno se va a correr, que no sabe si uno va a poder como se dice coronar, porque si va a pasar es por la frontera, y no sabe si va a coronar o no, pero siempre yo pensé que si coronaba, y bueno, acá estoy”

¿Y alguna anécdota que recuerdes?

“¿Del viaje?”

-Si-

“Bueno, del viaje. Cosas buenas, pues que venía era un grupo, como de ocho a diez personas que salimos de Cali, y en ese viaje veníamos una persona que parece ser que sus hermanos la pedían, pero nunca parece como si hubiera salido de su espacio. Entonces ella pues, algo, digamos gracioso, que le pregunté a ella, primero en el avión, ella no quiso comer que porque tú sabes que uno debe de comer por la cuestión de que si no comes ese dan cuenta, piensan que es que uno viene con alguna cosa ahí guardada. Cuando llegamos a Quito en el aeropuerto le pregunté qué pues para donde iba, que para que parte de estados unidos iba, me dijo que ella no sabía, entonces fue algo fue muy gracioso para mí que va a cruzar frontera pero que no sabe para dónde va, me causó como, ósea es algo que no se me olvida jamás porque ¿cómo que no sabe para dónde va? Si...

Entonces, bueno, cuando ya llegamos a México, pues a uno lo llevan a ciudad de México, una ciudad súper grande, pero de ahí luego teníamos que tomar un bus a un pueblo que queda cerca la frontera. En ese camino pues es un poquito maluco porque esas terminales son un poquito pesados, mucha congestión, mucha cosa así pero pues uno (...) La tensión de que uno tiene que estar pendiente de la persona que uno lo va guiando, porque uno no, ellos solamente le dicen a uno síganme, y uno tiene que salir. Ya cuando (...) se estaba poniendo de noche en ese pueblo Matamoros, México, salimos de ese pueblo como a la una de la tarde y esos son varias horas de camino, ya se empezó a poner de noche. Por ahí llegó, nos paró la inmigración de México y eso, nos chequearon el bus, y nunca nos dijeron nada, pero como, digamos una hora, una hora y media cuando nos dicen; porque uno tiene que estar como pilas que todo hay que saber que está pasando; entonces vimos que los coyotes se pararon. Los coyotes son los que lo cruzan a uno, entonces hicieron parar el bus y ya, no sé qué horas eran de la noche, nos teníamos que bajar (...) entonces uno se baja en una carretera que estaba oscura, ¡y que corra! Que métase (...) Sin saber para donde uno va, porque uno como ¿quién sabe uno para donde va? Sino que uno tiene que pues saber que, seguir los bultos esos que van allá delante.

Bueno, nos metimos como por, no sé si era un broche o un alambrado, en fin, no sé, pero era por donde se podía pasar porque yo no me rayé ni nada, y tiene uno que andar con una maleta liviana, algo bien cómodo, un bolso grande digamos. Cuando salimos

corriendo, y había una camioneta allá al fondo, dije bueno ya, tan cortica la corrida, la caminada, cuando nos hicieron subir en esa camioneta, entonces yo dije no, ya nos llevan para el hotel y quien sabe, ¿no? Porque pues en ese momento no hay a quien preguntarle nada, el hecho es que nos subieron a esa camioneta, entonces cuando eso estaba como en penumbra...

(OMITIDO)...

Entonces cuando (...) llegaron y pararon a la orilla de un río, y entonces que nos quitáramos los zapatos, y que había que cruzar, había que caminar suavemente sin hacer ruido con el agua (...) yo me había ido; como nos dijeron; me había ido con unos tenis, entonces yo me dije que no me iba a quitar mis zapatos, entonces yo me metí con mis zapatos, el agua dicen que es un río muy hondo, pero probablemente es como un brazo del río bravo, porque cuando íbamos en el bus vimos el río bravo, ese es un río grande y que es como que muy profundo, entonces asumimos que es ese río porque ese río, por donde cruzamos, a mí me da como, hablando vulgarmente, me da abajito de las nalgas, es muy arenoso, mucha arena hay.

Ya cruzamos ese río, entonces ahora a caminar, a caminar y caminar, Después como anécdota no muy agradable, nos dijeron que, entonces hay unas lámparas altísimas, se alcanzan a ver lejos, entonces nos mandaron a que teníamos que correr, la razón por la cual nos mandaron a correr era porque atrás venían unos hombres, y yo creo que ustedes han escuchado que en esos trayectos hay gente que asalta, hay gente que viola, entonces a nosotros nos mandaron a correr. Entonces pues yo andaba con una maletica muy liviana, yo corra, pero siempre éramos más hombres que mujeres y la julanita esa que no sabía para donde iba venía atrás, entonces bueno ya a ella le decía corre, corre porque también me daba pesar bueno, hasta que llegamos y dicen que ¡túrense al piso! Pero yo siempre iba como de no perder de vista a los hombres que iban corriendo más rápido, entonces cuando llegamos allí nos tiramos al piso, eso es como un llano (...) Llegamos allá, y yo me tiré al piso, entonces como algo que me pareció muy agradable, muy bonito; porque cuando yo caí, yo me tiré así, no caí en la piedra, sino que caí como recostada en la piedra; entonces allí yo me quede como esperando, y al ratico llego la muchacha esa, entonces nosotros que nos tiramos allí y los pilos que pasan, ósea, no nos vieron, gracias a dios que no nos vieron.

Entonces nos quedamos allí, y no sé de donde aparecieron los coyotes, allá aparecieron, entonces cerquita había como una carretera angostica, pero no una carretera como cerquita habían como casas. Nos hicieron subir en ese carro, entonces en ese carro nos llevaron como a una casa, esa casa tenía unas cuantas camas, y pues no era una casa como amoblada de televisión que cocina que todas esas cosas así, no, creo que las tienen diseñadas para acomodar gente como de paso, ahí llegamos a ese lugar y pues todo el mundo con los nervios a mil, porque pues es algo muy estresante, yo sentía como que a uno como que la piel, como que la carne le salta, pero bien, gracias a dios todo el mundo llegó sano, todo el mundo llegó sin problemas”.

-¿Esa fue la última parada?-

“Esa fue la última parada de la travesía. Entonces al otro día; en esa noche (...) a algunos nos permitieron hacer la llamada a los familiares que estábamos acá, que ya estábamos de este lado, y ya cuando, nos teníamos como en el paquete ese que uno paga ya está, hemos entregado el dinero de lo del tiquet de a donde uno va, que nos consiguen los pasajes que yo no sé qué. Nosotros estábamos cerca de un pueblo que se llama Brownsville de Texas, solamente un muchacho, un hombre viajó por la mañana, los demás a todos los vuelos fueron por la tarde, y ese aeropuerto es bien pequeño, entonces ahí fue el problema, que cuando estábamos todos el vuelo era casi a la misma hora, a diferentes partes, pero casi a la misma hora, nos cogió inmigración, mi vuelo yo casi abordaba e inmigración nos cogió, y yo fui a la última que cogieron. Bueno, es algo bien maluco y uno se queda como que no quiero pensar nada, porque pues nos montaron en una camioneta de inmigración y nos llevaron para inmigración.

En inmigración le miran el pasaporte a uno, nos tomaron las huellas. Y como anécdota desagradable, pues ellos son como (...) los de las películas que son todos altos y acuerpados y un poquito rudos y así, entonces a veces un poquito atrevidos, porque a mí me dijo uno, el que me tomó las huellas me dijo que lo pensará, que; como es una entrevista pues me imagino que eso es algo que se debe saber porque eso pasa, hay gente que la ha pasado, gracias a mi eso no me pasó; Que si yo me iba con el no tenía que tomarme las huellas